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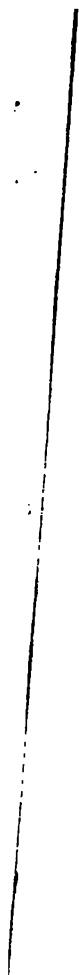
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A ROMANCE OF FRENCH NORTH AFRICA

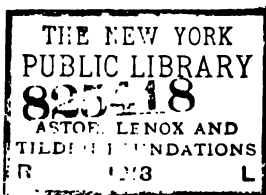
BY

MATTHEW CRAIG



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IRON WAR
CLUB
1918

To
THE THREE BEST FELLOWS ALIVE
THE EUROPEAN, THE AMERICAN AND THE AFRICAN
THIS STORY
WHICH, WITHOUT THEM, WOULD NOT BE



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Book One
Love's Constraint

CHAPTER I

MR. TIMOTHY TOWNSEND ACCEPTS A PANACEA

SABINE WINSTED continued to look into the open wood fire while the man drummed his fingers softly on the darkening window-pane. Without, the street lamps on the Avenue budded into long, converging lines of light.

Suddenly he wheeled about and came toward her, touching the room to rose-shaded radiance as he passed the electric button. He stood a moment looking down at her from his masterful place on the hearth rug, and his black brows came together perplexedly above his honest blue eyes as he took in the suave, satin lines of the slender shape before him.

"Hang it all! Sabine," he blurted out, at last. The girl looked up questioningly.

"Of course I'm out of the running. Understood," he went on disjointedly and frowning moodily into the fire. "You won't have me.

More than half suspect you're right. Only, er—well, half a loaf's better than no bread. I feel I'm equal to standing the spectacle of the other fellow's felicity if only I might be assured of your own. Oh! I know," as her brows lifted, "here's where I ought to mind my own business and—clear out. But I can't." He gave a savage dab with his foot at a stray cushion, then met her affectionate look penitently as she raised reproachful blue eyes to his face. "Why do you have to go 'way over there, Sabine?" he pleaded. "I tell you, you're making a mistake; the mistake—of—your—life," very solemnly.

She laughed lightly at his impressive scansion of the words, but she knew the situation was serious, even momentous. She lifted her round chin from the shell of her palm and looked at him amusedly, caressingly even, and quite deliberately.

"What a brute it is," she said softly, her tone reflectively impersonal. "Dear old Timmy; I never knew you to be nastier."

She spun him a cigarette from the tabouret beside her, taking one herself. He held her light. "That's better," she said, settling back in her chair. "Now, then. You were saying?" But her wide gaze went off again dreamily to the fitful

Mr. Townsend Accepts a Panacea 5

fire and unconsciously she rocked herself, softly crooning, as she hugged her silken knees.

"Damm it," said Timmy—under his breath—and turned to flick his ash into the grate.

"Sabine," he began, "I've known you for a long time."

"Twenty-three years my next birthday," she acceded promptly. "A cradle acquaintance."

"And I've asked you to marry me every day since you've come to the age of reason," he went on.

"Almost," she said, computatively.

"A fact," he returned with conviction. "And it never gets monotonous—to me. It's always something new and—wonderful." Uncontrollably his voice thickened.

"Look here, Timmy Townsend," she began, relinquishing her knees with sudden energy; then checked herself at the swift penitence of his look. "Are *you* playing fair now?" she asked, in a low tone.

"No, that's right," he assented, "I'm not. Shan't again." She made a winsome picture there in the intimacy of the firelight to the man who hungrily watched her.

He threw himself into an armchair opposite

her, and resolutely looked into the grate. A short silence; then "About this marriage of yours," he said as, elbows on the arms of his chair, he matched his finger-tips with judicial nicety.

She nodded.

"Well, in the name of all that's fitting," he argued, "why can't you be satisfied with the home product, my dear girl? Marry Bob Harvey, or Duncan, or any one of the half million of us in the adoring throng, and settle down here to the felicity we can all witness and understand; yes, and share in, by jove, under conditions and in the life you were born and bred to. . . . Of course we can't all marry you. But that's not saying we're reconciled to have you go out of our lives, like this."

"You talk as if Tunisia were Land's End," she protested. "It's not much farther than Spain."

"Well, it sounds as remote as Kingdom-Come."

"That's because you don't know your Geography."

"Well, it's not around the block, and that's far enough to suit me." He paused, then blurted out again, "Anyway, I never could see for the life of me where the wonderful charm of these foreign fellows comes in! It simply goes to show that girls shouldn't be allowed to choose their husbands.

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Er—what—?” as she laughed involuntarily. “Rather brings me round to the foreign idea, I suppose,” he amended, somewhat crestfallen. Apparently, dialectics was not his strong point.

He jerked his cigarette into the fire as a man who abandons argument, then turned to her wistfully, limply falling back into the old refrain: “Mark my words, Sabine. You’re making the mistake of your life. Believe me.” He was very much in earnest indeed.

The girl impulsively stretched out her warm fingers to him. “You’re a good fellow, Timmy,” she said, and there was plenty of affection—and to spare, he thought bitterly—in both tone and gesture. “But does it strike you that what you’re saying to me might be precisely what Monsieur de Madrillos’ friends are saying to him, perhaps, at this very moment? Why, by all that’s fitting, I believe you said, should he pass by the incontestable charm and quality of his own countrywomen and look for an American wife with traditions and education entirely alien to his own? The risks, you see, are surely equal.”

“No they’re not. A man never takes the chances in marriage that a woman does.”

“You’re right in one way. But only because

the chances of mistake are not supposed to be so drastic for the man."

He grunted acquiescence in the amendment, and there was a silence while he waited for her to go on.

She was in no hurry. And presently it was as if pursuing her own thoughts and with no word of explanation to him that she spoke.

"Are we, I wonder, just heedless puppets to be danced before the footlights? Or are we conscient factors in the world's big game. Willing intelligences who tread each his allotted path believing it to be traced by a Providence that cannot err? I'm a bit of a fatalist myself, you know. Only, I believe in a presiding Wisdom, not Impulse."

She raised her eyes to him and something fluttered in her white throat and the bow of her mouth quivered, in spite of her effort at control.

"Dear old Timmy," and her voice held the old caress that set his pulses racing. "How can I explain! You're all, all of you, good fellows. And you never for a moment seem to think of me." She looked away from the misery of his face. "Or of just how hard it's going to be to leave you all—and home—and old New York. But it's not my fault." She caught her breath almost with a sob.

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"Surely *I* can't help it if there's a—a something, Timmy dear, that you don't, any of you, seem to fill."

Timmy looked hard at his patent toes. A new understanding of her was at last coming to him. Was it an arraignment of him, of them all, what she had just said? Somehow, he felt vaguely guilty. Then he leaned over and looked into her eyes.

"Sabine," he said gently.

She smiled at him though her lips quivered.

"I want you to promise me something."

"Yes?" She longed, just then, to give him what he wanted, to take the love she could not fully share with the life she knew and home and friends and country. It was so much easier.

"Promise," he said, "to believe that 'a presiding Wisdom' as you say, has put *me* into your life for a purpose. And promise," he took her hand almost solemnly, "that whenever the time comes—"

"Mrs. Cantly, Mr. Cantly," announced the man from the door.

Sabine returned his hand pressure in silence, and their eyes ratified the clasped pact between them.

CHAPTER II

THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

WALKING home that night, Townsend at last, for the first time, brought himself squarely to face the fact of Sabine Winsted's marriage. Hitherto, he had looked upon it as upon any other of her frequent projects, altruistic, reformatory, or merely experimental, usually abandoned in incipience and finding sufficient justification in the passing interest it created; while leading her back safely to the nowhere of existing conditions, *ergo* one Timothy Townsend. But from the first, the present hymeneal departure had held elements that made for stability and to which he had been recklessly purblind. He saw that now and cursed himself for an egregious dullard. And he admitted that his rôle in the discard was going to be harder, even, than he had foreseen.

For, in the sanctuary of his day-dreams, Sabine was the divinity, the acknowledged worship of boy-

hood, youth, and prime. He could not remember a time when his mind's attitude toward her had not been a proprietary one. From knee-breeches and roundabout, through the acute stage of first long trousers and into the fullness of the dinner coat, his love for her had grown with his growth, expanding to the swelling measure of his ideals, until it had become, in sort, an inalienable right, like that to sun and air and elemental life. To him she was the beautiful, the desirable thing, crown of all the other prodigalities of fortune, and one day to become his very own by virtue of the unerring law of selection and his simple need of her. Now, as he walked along the Avenue under the familiar arc-lights and a brow-beaten city moon, he felt adrift, bewildered; alien to himself and to his nicely adjusted *modus vivendi*. Something had gone hopelessly wrong in the primaries. It was as if the orbit of his nativity-star had suddenly changed its ellipse into a circle, setting the ordered forecasts of his horoscope to spinning in a reckless rigadon.

Mr. Timothy Grist Townsend was—among several equally and delightfully uncomplex things—an American, a New Yorker, and an accomplished income-spender which last qualification

assumes, everywhere outside the Rogues' Gallery, an income to spend. He was of the generation but once removed from that of the income-maker, but separated from it as to view point and achievement, by the length of a dynasty. He was Manhattan born, college bred, grafted on a prep course at Harrow School, and—following upon this—while his tendency might be to pronounce it *awss* he was himself far from being one. He was fairly at home in several lands and yearly paid club dues in several of the world's capitals. His appearance bore in notably clear cut the stamp of that human currency which alone may pass through Dame Society's discriminating fingers. The natural line from earlobe to chinpoint was in approved Gibsonian proportion. The sartorial line of shoulder, girth, and omoplate was up to London's best achievement. He had received, possibly, more than the average share of intellectual endowment and this circumstance, rather than personal effort, had pushed him to fair results along certain lines. For the rest, an unquestioning conformist in the traditions of his order and its heavy evaluation of itself, he yet retained under the conventional buckram an elastic wadding of Hibernian humor, the fortunate clause in a legacy from some Celtic fore-

bear not too remote, however, to account for the limpid blue eye that went with it.

At present, the blue eye with its well-matched fellow narrowed to the unwonted travail of introspection.

While he regretted having allowed himself to be carried away, that evening, into his conversation with Sabine, a lapse which he felt was out of ruling in fairness to her, yet he was glad of the light it compelled from her upon her motives in marrying Madrillos. No matter about his own scathe. He admitted he was hard hit. But it went without saying that, instinctively, he should bear his hurt as the man of his class bears it, taking good or adverse luck as according to the rules of the game. As he saw it now, it was beautifully simple. Holding a full house to start with he hadn't played his hand to win and the other man had. He had made a false play somewhere; but where? Timmy had all the reluctance of the average young man of brawn to tackle the metaphysical fly when he suddenly encounters it in his syrup of life, yet he needed to investigate this one.

At Fifty-ninth Street he crossed the white, silent Avenue turning in mechanically at his club, caught himself, grunted and passed on. He was

in no mood now for Duncan and the others—Madrillos, perhaps, who was put up there, as at some half dozen other places during his stay in town, pending his marriage. He struck into the Avenue again, lighted another cigar and settled into his stride, heading for home.

For one thing, even had he known Sabine less thoroughly, he never could have made the mistake of undervaluing the man she had consented to marry. Townsend was not of those who sweep all other nationals into the category of 'foreigners' as who should say: "We are Greeks, the others are barbarians." He knew too well the worth, as well as charm, of the older civilizations. And he also knew that, with her canny concern for her own life settlement, her sense of exactly what she wants matrimonially—if indeed, she elect to wed at all—the present-day maid first must be satisfied of securing some compensating *summon bonum* before she break with the ties of birth and education and accept expatriation, with all that it stands for to a girl like Sabine.

What was this matrimonial super-felicity? he fretfully asked himself, this overwhelming weight in the balance against the happiness and security of an American marriage? For he had long since

renounced the concrete instance of marriage with himself.

He reached Gramercy Park and turned east. A taxicab passed him, then abruptly rounded to the curb as its occupant swung to the street, handed the chauffeur his fare and came on back toward Twenty-first Street while the cab drove off.

Instinctively, Townsend hesitated as he recognized Madrillos. But he could hardly lurk around a corner or flatten into a doorway, even had either been available, though his impulse was to do both.

"Ah! Townsend." Madrillos' warm tone voiced his pleasure as he recognized him and lifted his hat. "The last man I had thought to find here. Are you 'lost' or 'strayed'?"

"I might ask that question of yourself," returned Townsend, while Madrillos fell easily into step beside him.

"I? Oh! I'm night-seeing, an old trick of the tropics. I never seem to get blasé of this surprising unexpectedness of your New York." He looked about him appreciatively, alert to the impressions of the place. "Who, for instance, would ever think to come upon a quiet old-world square like this not a stone's throw from Broadway, the city's tremendous turbine!"

He held out cigarettes. And Townsend noticed, as he had done before, the rare Moorish damaskering of the gold case. Also noticed again the absence of all pose in the man. There was nothing of the superiority so usual in the old-world's attitude toward the newer country, no suggestion of either patronage of, or indifference to, his surroundings. On the contrary, his frank comment and readiness to appreciate had a tonic effect now on the younger man, stimulating him to something of a kindred glow.

"Shall we walk a bit?" said Madrillos. "It's an inviting old place, this. And what a night!"

Townsend looked vaguely overhead, where, indeed, was a sky for once to his mind unhyphenated with 'scraper.' The disheartened moon of Broadway here plucked up courage and now rode her high, effulgent way untouched by assailing arc-lights and the bickering mob of shoddy lamps. From the dark and hush of the old park came out to them, suddenly, a swelling imminence of spring, the tang of quickening earth and gathering sap and pushing green.

Madrillos' mobile face registered his response to the influences about them, and with the acuteness of sense which we associate with the primitive.

rather than the intellectual races. Watching him, the humdrum inclosure took on significance, almost charm, to Townsend. Somehow, he hadn't seen it just this way before. The moon striking on the white carved shaft of building over there, making it look like alabaster; that dark gabled mass of the house next to it, impressive and haughty by contrast with the cosy intimacy of the old-time hostelry that made the angle; and about it the penetrating sense of nature's vast forces silently at work within the mystery of the park itself. All this commonplace, to Townsend, suddenly seemed to matter, to take on value, in a way. Life, for him, just the uneventful round of the day's span, tensed to a fuller meaning, to a larger place in the scheme of things. And the nagging thought of Sabine receded to second place. Or rather, for perhaps the first time, it unconsciously associated her with the man beside him.

CHAPTER III

WHEREIN THE HEROES SHAKE HANDS

HE looked at his companion with a growing, if grudging, sympathy.

Hitherto, the cold formality of Townsend's manner toward his successful rival had stopped only short of a studied indifference and because of the regard he owed to Sabine. He had recognized, without—until to-night—in the least sharing, the generally conceded claim of Madrillos' personality. For, to a happy absence of the mannerisms and exuberance so intolerable to our inherited standards of good form, Madrillos joined the rarer union of thorough cosmopolitanism with tremendous simplicity, both of manner and opinion, which was sure to win at once with men. In the verdict of women there was reserve; commensurate, possibly, to that in his bearing toward them.

For one thing, the garrulity of society seemed beyond him. The chatter of the drawing-room

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found him courteously attentive, but aloof; its accepted liberty and facility with women were outside his grasp. So that, amid the easy bonhomie about him, the slight ceremoniousness of his manner was emphasized and made him seem archaic. Gallantry he had, innate and prompt. But flirtation as a pastime he swiftly catalogued among the occult sciences it were safer to leave to the initiate. It did not lend itself to his temperament.

So the majority of women, while they found him 'different,' found him dull. The few—generally the older ones—succumbed; and wondered what his love-making must be like. Because of the much he left unsaid and still managed, thrillingly, to convey. To them, as to Sabine, Tunisia did not seem so very far away.

Naturally, Townsend remembered something of all this, the gleaning and gossip of club and drawing-room, now, as he began to see him from a new angle.

Madrillos did not give the impression of being so tall as he really was. As the two men walked thus, shoulder to shoulder, the advantage, if any, was his. But he lost the extra half inch or so by a certain lounge of bearing that could not be called a stoop and yet was a loss of stature; atoned for,

however, by an extreme ease and distinction of carriage and a slender, supple, and perfectly balanced figure. His features were delicate and high-bred, the expression of his face at times, severe, even haughty; but also, at times, splendidly handsome in a dark, intense, impassioned way. The impression it left was that of vast emotional and nervous reserve force, well in hand, but pushing to intense impetuosity when aroused.

Townsend knew from Sabine that he was a Spaniard whose mother was a Frenchwoman; that he had a grandee cousin with a ducal title and many stony acres tucked away somewhere among the ancestral hills of Aragon; while he himself spent a divided life between Paris and North Africa, in the French Protectorate of Tunisia. Here, large landed interests and a sympathetic affiliation with the ruling classes of the country and their policies made him prominent both in French and native circles.

He looked younger than thirty-five and older than thirty, no doubt because of the close, pointed, virile beard which he wore in common with men who frequent the Orient. And his name on the birth register of the Sixteenth Arrondissement of Paris, was: Antoninus de Madrillos.

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A quite uncontrollable impulse to plunge moved Townsend.

"It's pretty hard on us all, your carrying Miss Winsted off, like this," he floundered, in perfectly transparent effort to be lightly impersonal. "We, over here, naturally feel we've a first lien on our pretty women. We'll have to put a protective tariff on them soon." The laugh that accompanied this attempt at airy persiflage sounded slightly hollow.

"My dear fellow," rejoined Madrillos, refusing the personal bait and sliding easily into the safe waters of generalities, "the attractiveness of your countrywomen is incontestable. Their charm and independent personality make them unique in the world. And who is responsible for it if not yourselves; who allow her the widest liberty for self-expression of any people to-day."

For a moment, Townsend said nothing. The idea of "allowing" as applied to their masculine attitude toward the girls he knew struck him as rather a subtle irony. Allow indeed! At that particular moment, had he been able, he would have secured Sabine behind iron bars like the veriest Turk of them all; thus easily does love make despots of the best of us.

"Perhaps," he acquiesced, a bit ruefully. "We really haven't much to say about it, you know. Our American women, bless them, generally help themselves to what they want. Of course we try, most of us, to manage our wives. That's part of our duty to ourselves. But our sisters, you see, are quite beyond us. And then lots of us haven't wives, or at best have only one; while we all seem to have no end of sisters. And that makes a majority." It was his tone rather than the facts he cited which caused Madrillos' smile.

"Of course," Townsend went on, "we haven't the continental idea of woman's rôle in life. We've been brought up with them. We're used to them and couldn't get along without having them around. We don't go in for the formality and reserve that Europeans—Latin Europeans—put into daily life. We want companionship in our wives, comradeship; chum-ery, as a chap I know calls it.

"Then you do not want love when you marry?" Madrillos put the question as a merely informative one, without emphasis of surprise.

"Love? Of course we want love," replied the rather astounded Townsend. "With us, love is the indispensable basis of marriage."

Madrillos' hand found the young man's elbow

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and held it firmly. "My dear young friend," he said earnestly, "Contradery is not love. No more than congeniality is love. Love is the supreme adventure; and the quality of adventure is precisely anticipation, risk, ~~uncertainty~~. It can have nothing of the assuredness and sangroid of contradery. . . . Nor the familiarity. For when the glamour goes, love goes. What remains is affection, devotion; all sorts of pleasant and estimable derivatives—love's small change, if you will, but not the unbroken coin."

CHAPTER IV

AN X-RAY ON LOVE

WHEN Townsend reached home after parting with Madrillos, who had declined his invitation to come in, he realized that he had a beastly headache and was glad to be alone. He poured himself a high-ball and throwing open a window, stood looking down into the Park.

He was still under the influence of Madrillos' words, of the forceful stir to life going on in the silence of the greening branches below him. Something of the wonder and mystery of the mating instinct was beginning to reveal itself to him, some hinting of its ineffaceable differences, its multiple demands and reticences which ever impel away from the openness of friendship and into the enticement and mystery of the untried, the unknown.

What primitive longing was it that first outlined the art of coquetry in the cave-woman? Not her

necessity to attract, Townsend reflected. For man's urge and need to mate have ever been the same. What then, if not her instinct for worship as for love; her need to erect an altar where he seeks but a couch, and, herself, to embody an ideal—puerile, often venal, sometimes sublime—but an ideal, and toward which she must forever strive. So that, where nature first created a female, society has evolved the alluring, the eternal feminine.

Townsend realized that here might be the crux of the question.

Sabine and he had romped and kindergartened, had had measles and their second teeth together. Later, they had quarreled and had it out and made up again. And they knew each other like an open book whose pages they had conned side by side since they could spell. Between them there could be no surprise, no breathless turning to a new chapter. Life together would mean for them just on and on; pleasant, intimate, undoubtedly; but with no thrill to the magic measure of the untried roundelay, no breathless catching up into the whirlwind of fire and desire of a great passion. They were 'pals'; dear and loyal and satisfying as such a dependable relation, no doubt, can be; but 'pals' nevertheless. Which, indeed, is a commendable



way to end matrimony, but not so good a foundation to begin it on. They had right to more; she to fuller measure in her eager quest of the true romance. And it was Sabine, in spite of the shackles of her environment, whose instinct was the true one.

But Townsend, that night, only glimpsed a corner of this through his hurt.

Book Two
The Land of Ancient Ifrikiyah



CHAPTER I

ENTER THE KADHI OF BEMBLAH

IT was early morning, barely five o'clock. Yet already the motley population of the Tunisian city of Bemblah swarmed in its narrow streets, a hurrying, babbling holiday crowd that overflowed with one accord through the several gates onto the beach which skirted its eastern walls.

The little Levantine coast town basked in the glow of the early sun which, even now, held promise of the fierce July noon in its strong, level rays. On all sides it was gathered in jealously by high, irregular walls that only straggled somewhat in relaxed vigilance to the north where they dipped to the broad inward curve of the salt marsh, the Sebkhah. Otherwise, the white crenellated line continued in unbroken circle to the east there to merge into the Kasbah whose square Saracenic towers and terraced battlements now shone, chameleon-like, in shifting pinks and blues and

ambers with the growing day. At its massive foot, unbroken stretches of white sand shelved down to meet the slow, lapping caress of the Mediterranean touched to fairy iridescence by the sun. In front, across the sea toward Tunis, the outline of Zaghouan's far-away peak was penciled in elfin silver on the deepening blue of the sky.

It was the fourteenth of July and the French national holiday.

To mark the occasion, the French commandant had ordered the usual review of troops and night retreat with torches, which program the Beylikal authorities had amplified by a fantasia of Arab horsemen and games and junketings dear to the native heart.

It was these now which hurried the dilatory, for already they would seem to be in full swing. Eager and excited crowds swayed and shoved around the various rivals in the feat of climbing greased poles, sprinting with bound knees, swallowing grass-hoppers and kindred prowess. Everywhere hawkers circulated their wares amid an indescribable din, vendors of whirligigs and screech-toys, of dates and pistache nuts; piemen, carrying their pastries upon their heads on a square board. Sellers of lemonade, their earthen jugs in a bando-

leer, rattled their brass cups invitingly. Coffee-boys from nearby booths recklessly balanced the scalding contents of their long-stemmed pots in the vicinage of unprotected legs. Baggy-breeched urchins darted ubiquitously, offering jasmine sprays and roses in a piercing falsetto.

In a corner against the wall, a sand diviner from the desert of Oued-Rir beyond Biskra bent over a handkerchief full of peppery-looking sand spread on the ground before him, the center of a dark ring of intent faces. Here the crowd pressed forward around a snake-charmer showing off a family of yellow cobras that reared and writhed to the tune of his piping reed-flute; and here it fell back precipitately before a couple of tall Bedouins from the South, who led along a domesticated-looking lion by a camel-hair rope.

Naturally, the wealthier and better class of Arabs kept to themselves, lending their presence rather as part of the pageant than as participators in it. Of these the older men, in groups and pairs, chatted politics and business as they leisurely proceeded through the tangled throngs, the dignified swaying of their white draperies creating the undulating motion which characterizes the Oriental crowd. Through the careless folds of their spot-

less *bernous* showed gleaming slashes of undercolor, and the gold and white coils of their crimson-capped turbans, from which fell the long blue silk tassel, graceful as a plume, contrasted well with their clear-cut, high, dark features.

The younger men, gay, careless, yet alert under their apparent lounge of manner, were as handsome a set of young fellows as might be found anywhere. Fresh from the baths and suggestive of unguents, perfectly groomed and gorgeously robed in the delicate hues the Orient affects in masculine attire, they shone with the lithe and brilliant characteristics of their race. They wore a rose or a jasmine flower tucked jauntily in the folds of the turban above the ear—in the absence, perhaps, of an available button-hole—and they carried their modish bamboo sticks with the intuitive *chic* of the boulevard. There were birth, breeding, all that makes for class distinction, in every line of their well-set-up figures.

In all the holiday crowd there was not a native woman. Occasionally a French officer passed by accompanied by his wife with, perhaps, her sister or friend, or the wives of petty functionaries who made a point of including their families in all official appearances. But these were at intervals

long enough to make them marked; and—with a glowing sprinkle of Jewish women in the silken sheen of their native dress that read like a page from the Book of Esther—they summed up the feminine contingent in the scene.

Into this, however, came Sabine de Madrillos.

She walked along lightly beside her husband, slender, detached, her trim high heels scarcely outlining a disk on the well-packed sands. One loosely gloved hand gathered her white linen skirts, the other held the pink parasol under which her face shaded into delicate, rosy shell-curves.

To a stranger, the scene before her was one of unique, even semi-barbaric sight and sound; but Sabine was used to it now. She was here to stay. The first thrill that had sent her well-nigh headlong from her coign of vantage in the bulging, grilled window of the Hôtel de France at Tunis had had time to slow its vibrations in these last six months. The look of exaggeration and unreality, inevitably suggesting the theater-box view-point, had gradually adjusted itself to the new setting in which her life, henceforth, was more or less cast. These costumed men and women were not part of a pageant gotten up for the Occidental tourist. They were pursuing their intense human lives

with a purpose and a passion she hardly yet divined but that stood far apart, she felt, from travesty. Already she had begun to drink of the East; and its stealthy seduction, like that insidious native drink *boukha*, was opening out new horizons to her Western perceptions.

Now, with eyes alert and chin well up, she moved along, returning the grave greetings of occasional acquaintances, while Antoninus lifted his hat. In his dark, half-closed eyes was the same swift look, the Arabic readiness under an easy, supple lounge of gait and manner.

"Here comes the Khaïd our way," he remarked. "And it looks as if the Kadhi were with him. You'll remember to pass to their left," he reminded and smiled, knowing the grimace of protest she was sure to make.

"Heavens! is there no limit to their Oriental etiquette! Why, it's worse than the court of Spain."

"As bad, at least," he admitted. "You forget that Spain must have borrowed her ceremonial from the Moors."

But there was no need to put the latest court ruling into practice. As the dignitaries mentioned advanced, their respective suites trailing

behind them in a triangle exactly in the order of the wild-gander's migratory flight, the Khaïd, with marked friendliness, came forward to meet them, his two fingers extended in the Oriental greeting.

Antoninus returned it with practiced ease exchanging, meanwhile, the usual litany of compliments for his wife and himself. He punctiliously repeated the ritual with the Kadhi, nodded to the men he knew and fell into quiet talk, leaving Sabine and the Khaïd, who were old acquaintances, to get along so well as their limited medium of communication might admit.

The kind old Governor said a few smiling words whose complimentary intention alone was clear to her untrained ear, but to which she tried to respond with appropriate grace, if not entire coherence. With grave courtesy, he took the jasmine spray from his turban and slightly touched it to his lips, in the graceful Eastern gesture, then held it out to Antoninus with a gallant indication toward her.

"Give it to Madame yourself, *ya Hadj Salah*," said Antoninus. Which Hadj Salah did. When with another brief compliment and bow, he passed on, followed by his suite.

Not so the Kadhi. During the foregoing, he

tainly not to respond to, the covert challenge in the man. But instinctively her tone was ice and her chin gave an unconscious tilt. She paused; then, with dignity, "Your family, I trust, is well?" she asked.

He brought the finger-tips of his right hand devoutly to his lips and forehead, "Unto Allah be praise and to our lord Mohammed," he said; which obviously was intended for "yes." "Madame will, perhaps, care to visit our house sometime? It would be deeply honored."

She bowed low, perhaps a trifle haughtily. Slipping her hand through Antoninus' arm, she moved past.

"What a disagreeable man, Antoninus!"

He laughed softly and with relish. Few things escaped him. Certainly not the little passage-at-arms between the two, which amused him greatly.

"Well, no doubt of it; from your view-point," he acceded her. "But he is also a power here, and has great influence with the Arabs. He's clever too. Studied in Stamboul and Syria, I believe. Rumor makes him both ambitious and intriguing and the Residence at Tunis keeps a pretty sharp lookout on his movements."

"I don't wonder; so should I," she returned

with conviction. A short, reflective silence followed before she added. "I don't think I care to see his 'family'."

"So bad as that?" His tone was amusedly quizzical. Then it changed, as he lightly patted her arm. "My dear, you must. There's no reason really, to offend him, even if it were wise to do so. Besides, it's a great compliment in fact that he pays you—me—us."

"Your 'family'," she suggested. "Pray let us be correct. Well" after a moment, and she visibly brightened as her curiosity pushed to the fore, "it's sure to be interesting, that's one comfort."

But a strange impression kept with her—of looking through thick green glass at a sea-serpent coiled in sluggish, icy depths, but somehow, over a volcanic sea. For Sabine owned imagination among other things.

CHAPTER II

SABINE'S TUNISIAN HOME

THE home to which Sabine had come was one of the half-dozen handsome houses in Bemblah. It was a spacious structure which Antoninus held from the Beylikal Habbous on a ninety-nine years' lease. Like all Oriental houses, its blank plaster exterior, in line with the street and broken only by the Moorish doorway of inlaid marbles, gave no hint of the extent and beauty of the interior. And it struck Sabine that the dwellings and the women of the East are alike in this studied concealment. Nothing could give greater contrast from the glare and heat and sordid life of the street than the step into the cool seclusion within.

It was all an enduring delight to her. Madrillos' knowledge of Eastern life and its possibilities was too profound to betray him into any compromise with European ideas in fitting up his home.

He had made it as strictly Oriental as was consistent with Western indispensables to comfort. And for this Sabine soon felt lasting gratitude. The incongruity, even hideousness of paper-hung walls with varnished rococo furniture and French gilt ornaments, as glimpsed by her later in the several European houses she had occasion to enter, gave her shuddering pause.

Her first general impression on the evening of her home-coming was of stretches of white wall above the high dado of tiles that was brilliant as a gorgeous tapestry; walls that reached remotely to ceilings beamed with cedar where dim geometrical patterns in gold and green faded into a flat wash of dull red-brown; the impression of a polished expanse of marble under foot, cut everywhere by small, yielding rugs; of warm, soft draperies over couches and ottomans, before archways and betwixt pillars. Standing here and there, like sentinels, were tall candlesticks of gilded wood three feet high with huge pascal candles of saffron-colored and perfumed wax. They might have come from the high altar of St. Patrick's Cathedral at home. There was a brattice screen of ancient Moorish stucco work that would have delighted the heart of a collector, in the patio; and here Antoninus



had introduced a small fountain of rose marble with gold fish, "according to the best traditions" he assured her. It was the one bridal touch he had given to the house and was intended, he said, to take the place of the open chimney in the living-room at home. She felt at the time that a fish fountain hardly seemed to meet the requirements of a log fire. But she soon fell into the way of bringing her book or work here, where the tireless tinkling splash invited comradeship, and about it soon centered the life of the house, as Antoninus had foreseen.

Opening from the dining-room was a roof garden where stunted palms grew in huge jars of blue and yellow faience, where fleshy green creepers, like giant portulaca, tangled over the walls and great flower splotches of color hung languorously in the daytime or raised themselves in an outburst of perfume at night. And all about spread the square white roofs, stabbing the sky with their minarets, until finally they met the whiteness of the Sepkra to the north. The rest of the sky line was held in by the blue wall of the Mediterranean.

Sabine never tired of this roof view of the sea. Out there beyond the uttermost azure rim was her land, the land she had given up. And as the

Moslem turns his face to the east, so her thoughts sped out to it in more than reverent allegiance. But never with regret. Already, the fascination of her surroundings held her too strongly for regret.

"And if it be I, as I suppose it be," she repeated softly as, sunk on many cushions and feet crossed under her, she nursed her knees in approved Eastern pose. This amber and azure Moorish bedroom, so minutely fitted to her least need, seemed to call forth in her another personality, like the little woman in the nursery rhyme, a sort of dual self, familiar yet unknown.

"What is that?" Antoninus smiled back, not catching her words.

"I merely expressed my doubt as to being my usual six-penny self," she said with a comprehensive look about her while involuntarily giving herself a little shake.

"Of course you're not," he returned. "No one remains quite the same after any spiritual or material experience. Even from day to day——"

"An-to-ni-nus!" she cut in gravely, relinquishing her knees to hold up an impressive forefinger. "If you're going to begin your Eastern lore with that sort of bromidical rehashment——"

"Ah! But I'm not," he interrupted in his turn.



And with a swift stride he was beside her and had laughingly caught her to him. "I'm going to begin it far differently," emphatically. "With sequins for sixpence—will you have them? so long as it's good coin of the realm." And he kissed her many times.

CHAPTER III

THE WAY OF THE MODERN CORSAIR

SABINE'S début in Bemblah had been somewhat dramatic. Looking back to it, she and Antoninus appreciated, with relish of what was easily a serio-comic element in the situation, that the destinies which had stage managed her arrival had provided novelty enough in the manner of effecting it. Certain it is, it made a record for her among the timorous Levantine ladies whose interest and curiosity were highly aroused by the coming of so notable a personage as the bride of Antoninus, who was also, *un'Americana*.

After a fortnight, they left the wonder that is Tunis taking the evening Transatlantic steamer for the short night-run down the coast to Susa. Antoninus wanted Sabine's first sight of that lovely city—the Hadrumetum of the Romans, the Djôh-
era of the Saracens—to be from the sea. From Susa the short drive to Bemblah was a matter of

two hours and Antoninus' habit was to have his own trap meet him there.

It was a nasty November night when they embarked at Tunis. Sabine went early to her cabin which was directly across the passage from that of Antoninus, their doors, which they left 'on the hook,' facing each other. She was fast asleep, as was everyone else, when, without warning, the boat slapped over on her side at an angle of forty-five degrees. Simultaneously came the groan of straining timbers, a crash of falling objects, followed by the frenzied shrilling of bells and calling of terrified passengers. Sabine, unresisting, was banged against the inner side of her berth to which she wildly clung, knowing that, in the next instant, the swing back would send her out upon the floor.

But in that instant Antoninus, who also had been asleep, was out of his berth and had crossed to her. Bracing himself against the couch, he reached overhead, found and placed the extra berth-board with incredible swiftness and, when the boat lurched back, Sabine rolled against the board and into the safety of his arms. She looked into his smiling eyes, only half understanding.

"Frightened?" he asked quietly, as if he said "sugar in your tea?"

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"What is it?" she inquired vaguely, reassured now that he was there. "Something surely has happened." Doors still slammed. There were running footsteps of cabin boys and smothered oaths, as spilled sleepers collected themselves into their berths again. With a long shiver through the length of her beam, the steamer righted herself and was smoothly on her course once more.

Antoninus sat down on the couch a few feet from her. "They will do it," he ruminated. "That's the Cap Bon, the northernmost point of Africa. And the captain, instead of steering wide as he should do, has taken it short. He saves a good hour's time, but at the cost of this. These old sea dogs risk it every time. They'll do it once too often."

"I should simply have broken my bones if you hadn't been here," she said gratefully.

"Well, I was here, you know."

He looked off through the port hole at the blur of low, scudding sky. "It's dirty weather. I doubt if we shall make Susa. Too bad we didn't decide to come by rail." He straightened her pillows and coverlet as he spoke and arranged the disordered things again ready to her hand. "Better try and get some sleep," he counseled, bending over her.

"And you?" she asked, returning his kiss.

"Oh! I shall have a cigarette and a look around before turning in again. We're due at Susa about six. But don't get up till I call you." He left her with a little hand wave at the door.

Awhile she lay and gave herself pleasantly to the ship's motion, the sharp recall to the ever-present menace giving a fine edge to her sense of comfort and safety. She thought of the black racing seas all about which were speeding them on, as they had sped the galleys of Rome and Carthage centuries before, and pictured to herself the rock-bound African headland that was slipping past them out there in the night. The little incident just now gave her a new feeling of confidence in Antoninus, in his power to guard and take care of her, as nothing else had done. His watchfulness and shielding love enveloped her in this strange land. With joy she abandoned herself to the comforting dependence of her new estate, and it was enwrapped in this sense of safe-keeping that, after a time, she fell asleep.

Next morning, Antoninus came in to tell her they were anchored off Susa about a mile out and with little prospect of landing, owing to the heavy seas. There was a large cargo to be discharged

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besides the score or so of passengers, so no need to hurry.

Considerable excitement prevailed on deck when, at last, Sabine came up. There was no tender to take them off and the rowboats for that purpose, manned by piratical-looking Maltese and Arabs, after repeated efforts to reach the steamer from the shore, gave up the attempt. Such pusillanimous behavior was greeted from the ship's deck by disgusted and derisive jeers in the gutturals of a half-dozen lingoos. Perhaps the boats could have managed it if mysterious intimation from the steamer had not, somehow, been given them that the Captain was not disposed to risk discharging his freight into the sea. And the passengers who would be plucky enough at the last moment to chance a ducking weren't worth while.

After waiting through the morning and early afternoon for the weather to clear, they finally steamed away, leaving Susa "the white" with her mosques and minarets close-hooded in a sky of gray, and headed for Kuriat, the little sentinel island lying outside Bemblah.

"We're sure to make it here," said somebody near Sabine, as they sighted the white rocks. She

devoutly hoped so and turned inquiringly to Antoninus who came from a talk with the Captain.

"It's going to be the same thing, I'm afraid," he told her. "Only here we get much closer to shore. The Captain agrees to let us - you and me - land, providing I take all the responsibility. Naturally. He can't engage the Company's liability. We're the only passengers for here, so it seems, excepting some Maltese and Jews, and they couldn't be paid to land. There's plenty of freight but it will have to stand over."

"What will they do with it?" Sabine asked.

"Carry it on down the coast till the return trip."

"And is that the prospect ahead of us if we can't land now?" she cried.

"Yes, a two weeks' trip down to Tripoli and back. I shouldn't care to try the land journey with you."

"Two weeks of this weather!" she voiced desperately. "I'd rather cast myself bodily into the sea and swim for it. We've simply *got* to land, Antoninus."

"If it's possible," he agreed. "The Captain doesn't like it, but I bullied him a bit. You see, I've known Bernadotte a long time," he added. But his brows came together anxiously while he

Sabine, and the old sailor returned their bow with nautical precision. "Monsieur Chotard here," went on Antoninus, while the Agent bowed his best to Sabine, "places the Company's *chaloupe* at our disposition. And now it is for you to decide. What do you say?"

Sabine turned to the reverential Agent. "Since Monsieur Chotard has succeeded in coming aboard I suppose he expects to get back to shore as well?" she interrogated, smiling. And Chotard, his heels firmly glued together, murmured an "Evidently," in his best society form.

"Then I don't see why it should be more dangerous for us than for him," she answered Antoninus.

"But wait a bit," hurried the latter. "You'll have to go over by the pilot's ladder, you know."

"Why, it doesn't look so hard to do," she said.

The Captain and Chotard exchanged a swift glance.

"Madame," put in Bernadotte bluntly, "it takes a deal of nerve to go over a ship's side by the pilot. I've not seen a woman like you do it yet. I think your husband is accepting great risks for you."

Sabine turned to Antoninus and their eyes met. In hers he read absolute confidence in his leader-

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ship. "I'll risk it, Bernadotte," he replied quietly; then slapped the sailor's shoulder in grateful acknowledgment. "You're a good fellow," he exclaimed. The Captain grunted.

"May I have my trunks?" asked Sabine, the feminine coming to the fore. Bernadotte looked uncomfortable, Chotard helpless. Antoninus came to the rescue.

"Nothing but your steamer trunk. Mine stays aboard with the rest of our luggage. We'll have them in a fortnight," cheerfully. "You see, we'd risk swamping the *chaloupe*."

"Yes, I see—of course," said the newlywed with visions of her steamer trunk's contents stretched over two weeks of her honey-moon. "I'm ready when you are, Antoninus. Goodbye; and thank you very much." She held out her hand to the Captain.

"*N'y a pas de quoi*," muttered the old fellow under his whiskers. He found Antoninus decidedly obstinate in this matter of getting ashore, willy-nilly.

Sabine and Antoninus walked to the ship's side where he explained how she was to do. Every soul aboard had come aft to see her go off—*questa Americana* who feared nothing.

"I go first, of course," Antoninus was saying. "The second mate here," Sabine nodded to the man, "will help you over. Don't hurry. Take your time coming down. And never mind about showing your stockings." She smiled at the recommendation so very like him. "At the bottom hang on till you hear my signal, or the mate's. He will give it at the same time in case you don't hear me. And at once let go. This is imperative. Let me show you what I mean," he carefully insisted, drawing her to the rail. "Watch Chotard go down. See?"

She watched the Agent as he let himself down along the black, slippery side. Below him the *chaloupe* wildly rocked and pitched, now three yards away from the ship, then all but sucked under her great looming hull, while the brawny Maltese boatmen strained and sweated to keep their frail craft from being dashed to pieces against the steamer's iron sides.

Chotard hung by his strong arms watching his time over his shoulder and dropped like an arrow in the fraction of a minute that the *chaloupe* hugged the steamer's hull.

"*You* can't know just the right moment to drop, so you must trust me to say when. See what I

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mean?" said Antoninus. It wasn't necessary for him to insist that if she let go a second late she would fall into the black waters that seethed in fury around the tossing *chaloupe*.

"I see," she said simply, raising her eyes to him, and this time he searched them earnestly.

"I'm not afraid, if that's what you mean," she whispered reassuringly, squeezing his arm. He pressed it to him hard an instant; then threw the end of the rope he had secured around her to the mate, said a last word of recommendation to the man and went over the side while she leaned out to watch him go down. He was so sure, so lithe. It looked easy. She felt, too, there was not a man of all that watched who would not leap to her rescue if need be. And, too, there was the rope under her arms. Really, it was simple enough. She stooped and secured her scant skirts about each ankle, then smiled down into Antoninus's anxious face as she took the mate's hand; and in an other moment was letting herself down the slippery, writhing ladder.

But in that moment everything had changed for her, such is the significance of a shifting of the point of view. The philosophy of the deck-boards is not that of the pilot's ladder. Her whilom op-

timism took a sudden quirk. This feat of scrambling down a ship's side by a slimy rope assumed unexpected proportions, now, in the concrete.

The line of peering faces above, the ship's black side before, and below the screaming waters, waiting—Down, down. She was at the last rung now and she hung nervously, convulsively, above what she knew was either the sea or the straining *chaloûpe*. Her eyes never left the mate's face above, and she saw his signal before she heard Antoninus' cry. Without an instant's hesitation, in spite of her instinct to clutch, she let go her hold, and the next instant she was in Antoninus' arms and the *chaloûpe* had shot a dozen yards from the ship. There was a cry of relief, a flutter of greeting from the deck and Antoninus waved his hat gaily.

But the end was not yet. Every receding wave left its quota of water in the bottom of their boat and they were in imminent danger of swamping as well as capsizing. When at last they touched shore, the strong-limbed Arabs sprang out and ran the *chaloûpe* far up the beach. But not before a last vindictive wave captured the ill-starred steamer trunk and tossed it overboard.

The quick drive to the town was a gay, if damp

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affair, the short November day considerably giving of its darkness to screen Sabine's weather-worn plight from a might-be curious public, as they passed.



CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST MUEZZIN CALL

AN hour later, she was in her own room, the wonderful, strange room which was henceforth home for her.

A bed of glowing charcoal lay in the flaring brazier, like roses in a brass bowl. A hot drink was beside her on the low table and she was able to assure Antoninus that never, really never, had she felt better. No cold, no fatigue. Her dripping clothing had been borne off by the young Jewish person who had been temporarily annexed for her personal services until her own maid should follow from Marseilles; but the sea-soaked steamer trunk yielded nothing wherewith to replace them. Its entire contents were hopeless. Here indeed, she sighed, was a pretty state of affairs for the home-coming of a bride.

For the moment, she curled up comfortably enough on the low divan, wrapped in a fleecy,

white *bernous* belonging to Antoninus. He had only to draw from a well-stocked wardrobe for himself. But for her, the *bernous*, though ample, was evidently inadequate. Antoninus looked over his apparel in helpless perplexity. The *bernous*, which might serve as an occasional bath-robe, was the sole native garment he possessed. He did not affect the cheap travesty of Oriental costume which, here, was a distinctive appanage of creed and race.

It was Beyhela, the aforesaid young Jewish person, who finally furnished a solution. Sabine had been contemplating her delightedly for some time, in silence, forcedly, since the girl knew nothing but Arabic. She was slim and dark and tall, perched upon her high wooden cothurnes. She wore the Tunisian Jewish dress, a close-fitting white cotton trouser descending to the ankle and a short white cotton tunic half way to the knee, open at the throat and with short, loose net sleeves and tied about the waist by a bright red cord with tassels. A brilliant green cloth bolero with flaring points at the shoulders and a crimson silk handkerchief, tied close across the forehead and brought beneath her superb black braids, completed an ensemble that was striking enough. But, to Sabine's

Western sensibilities, the girl was redolent of musk—the strong, acrid native blend of sandal and saffron and nard—besides showing a general deficit in the Occidental requirement of soap and water.

“I suppose there’s no help for it,” said Sabine at last, as Antoninus came in from his ineffectual rumaging. “I’ve simply got to have female garb—or what’s accredited as such in this country—of some sort, Turk, Jew, or Gentile, else I’ll take my death of cold. Do you suppose Beyhela could be trusted to produce something clean, and not too smelly, in the way of garments for me? I’m stouter than she is,” she pursued, eyeing the girl’s straight-up-and-down figure appraisingly, “but she’s such a queer shape that everything will meet all right.”

Antoninus laughed. But he flashed a look of quick relief as he studied Beyhela a moment, then spoke a few brief sentences to her, whereupon she disappeared.

“Arabic sounds like magic,” commented Sabine. “You string together several hiccoughs and hang them onto a cabalistic sneeze, and the effect is like an incantation. Things come. See!” she exclaimed laughingly, as Beyhela re-

turned with what proved to be her *fiesta* costume tied up carefully in a square of flowered calico. She spread the pieces out upon the floor, and very festive indeed they looked, all gold embroidered and bespangled, to Sabine's unaccustomed eyes. Antoninus, looking down, approved each piece critically as the kneeling girl held it up for his inspection. They looked brand-new.

"I shall never know which goes first," said Sabine, somewhat abashed at the intricacy of the undertaking.

"Beyhela will help you," he said. And she did. With the result that, a quarter of an hour later, Sabine came out to join him in the patio, rather shyly, but bubbling over with the fun of the thing. And 'Solomon in all his glory' was not more resplendent than was she, to the unfeigned admiration of her handmaiden and the delighted eyes of Antoninus. 'Adorable' he thought she looked and, of course, told her so. But he also told her that the qualificative stood without relevance whatever to her costume.

They dined gaily, in what seemed to Sabine a mid-Lenten travesty, except for Antoninus. His civilized dinner-coat made a sane contrast, she thought, to her own Queen of Sheba get-up, to

Hassan's voluminous white raiment and quick, dark face and padded movements. The boy's fascinated eyes never left her. Ali, the cook, white-robed and impressive, came in, ostensibly to preside at the ceremonial of pouring the Cliquot. If the man saw Sabine she was unaware of it. Custody of the eyes is a strict rubric with the Arab house servant.

Antoninus lifted his glass and looked across the heaped scarlet of the pomegranates between them.

"To you, my far-away Princess, near at last. . . . And come into your kingdom." A deep ring of tenderness underlay the lightness of his tone and his dark face flushed with feeling.

She nodded gaily and sank her lips into the bubbling amber. Then she choked unexpectedly and hastily set down her glass. For the first time her eyes brimmed with tears.

On the instant he had her in his arms. "Beloved," he murmured, "*Mon adorée*."

"It's childish," she said deprecatingly, nervously, between crying and laughing, while she fumbled vainly about her strange dress for the place where a handkerchief logically might be expected.

"It's natural," he returned, tenderly, and helped

her to an end of her gauze sleeve with which to dry her eyes. "There's no provision for tears in Hebrew *festa* clothes, it seems." And they both laughed.

Yet under the whimsy of his words and gesture were a deep sympathy for and understanding of her emotion, her sudden sense of strangeness and alienage in this heathen land to which he had brought her. And a great rush of tenderness for all she had given up for him swept him. He knew there was neither regret nor unhappiness in the fine edge of this quick access of feeling. He drew her through the open window onto the terrace.

The sky had cleared. The moon's silver disk lay stamped like a coin on the velvet blue of coming night. The white roofs stretched below them like a phantom city of mystery and unreality. Jasmine flowers and tuberose in the jars about called out their perfumed message, and the palm heads lazily waving their plumes cast pale streamer shadows about them where they stood. In the bizarre splendor of her dress, Sabine fitted marvelously—a worthy Sheherazade—into the Thousand-and-One-Nights' setting. Traces of her recent emotion still showed in her heightened color and the humid luster of her eyes, while the sumptu-

ousness and fashion of her Eastern dress seemed to surprise and emphasize a quality of amative seduction hitherto but suggested in her character. Never had she been so lovely to Antoninus. Never so womanly, so his own.

He held her to him silently, almost reverently while he waited for something, for the culminative touch which, he knew, would crown the beauty and meaning of the sacrosanct moment.

And it came. Sudden and high and clear it cut the silence like a silver scimitar, the voice of the muezzin from the big mosque calling the fifth hour of prayer. Infinitely solemn rang out the ritual words. . . .

"God is great. There is no god but God." . . .

Mournfully, melodiously they trailed off into the silence whence they came. And a moment, the enfolding silence seemed to deepen into awe. Then, with one accord from near and far, the cry was taken up. From countless minarets it floated out over the Moslem city, the exultant and immutable slogan of Islâm, its unceasing praise to Allah the Compassionate, the All-Merciful.

A little way off on a housetop an unveiled woman stood motionless at prayer. The crimson of her *fouta* showed warm against the deepened

dusk of the sky line. Her upturned face caught the scant light like polished ivory. The end of her white veil swam on the air. She was sculptural, vaguely doleful, this cloistered woman, plagued against the purple enamel of approaching night.

A tremor seized Sabine. A poignant emotion rose in her throat. Her hand tightened on her husband's arm.

"Antoninus," she whispered, "it is too beautiful."

For all answer, the arm about her drew her closer and held her as if he would never let her go. Looking up, she met his shining eyes and she saw that his lips moved.

"*Allah ou akbar*. There is no god but God." they repeated; then dropped to find her own.



CHAPTER V

AN EASTERN HOUSEHOLD VERSUS WESTERN RULE

"*L* A, la (no, no). Before Allah I swear it. *Bi Roabbi!* (by the Creator)."

The voice that rose in shrill protest suddenly dropped before a vigorous "Sh—sh!" from Ali, and the kitchen door closed. But the men's angry voices continued.

"What need to lie?" came Ali's scornful retort. "Have I not here the proof, *ya ked'd'ab* (you liar). *Chouf!* (look)." At this last word, his usually mild voice leaped to a strident tremolo, and Sabine concluded it was time she should investigate. This was the first word of dispute to reach her from her well-ordered Arab household.

In the outer hall, the water-carrier's boy was bringing in his earthen jars. He pushed open the kitchen door with his knee, then stopped, transfixed evidently by the spectacle within as well as by the greeting he encountered.

"*Iezzil* (enough)," cried Ali to him brutally. "Think you I will let you fill the water-jar with bits of glass? *Emchi!* (Be off.)"

The boy stood in the doorway, uncertain and open mouthed, while his elders settled it between them.

"But how can there be glass in the water?" came the half sobbing protest of Hamed, the water-carrier. "Did I, myself, not draw it only now where always I draw it? By Allah, the Beneficent, it is from the cistern by the Gourbi Gate. As thou knowest, I go far to fetch the purest of waters for the Arfi's (master's) house."

"It is for that I pay thee," returned Ali pitilessly, "and not for filthy water from the first foul *majen*. And until this day I thought the money well earned. Be we followers of Sidi Aissi in this house that we may swallow jagged glass and yet live, thinkest thou? And perhaps the Arfi would leave a sound bone within me if I served him bits of broken bottle in his drink—*ya Hamed!*" with immeasurable and untranslatable scorn.

"But I say there *can* be no broken bottles," maintained Hamed doggedly.

"And I say I have eyes," clamored Ali passionately, threatening to burst out anew.

In the heat of action, the two men had not seen Sabine who was standing beside the boy and taking in the situation before her with keen appreciation. Ali held up a ladle of water evidently dipped from the big water-jar that Hamed had already half filled, and in which, with a wrathful forefinger, he chased about what certainly appeared to be floating bits of thin glass. And at each denial, exasperated at this controverting of the evidence of his senses, he thrust forward the convicting dipper a little further under the nose of the tall and unhappy water-carrier who, in the face of such overwhelming proof, was on the verge of tears.

Seeing Sabine, both men stopped somewhat sheepishly, and Ali got his dipper behind him in a trice. She said nothing but went to the water-jar and examined its contents to convince herself that the trouble was as she suspected before taking action. Then she turned toward the tall Arab who shifted uneasily.

"Hamed is quite right," she said reassuringly. "How could glass get into the cistern?"

Both men stared wide-eyed, no one more surprised than Hamed himself. He had eyes as well as Ali. Sabine saw their incredulity.

"Bring me the dipper, Ali," she told the man,

and taking out several bits of the ice she laid them within her open palm. "Now, if you watch, you'll see the pieces become smaller and at last disappear. Glass, you know, couldn't do that. Watch."

Thus invited, Ali, Hamed, and the boy eagerly surrounded her, peering into her outstretched hand. And she felt for all the world, like a conjurer performing his trick as the ice gradually melted until there remained only a little water in the hollow of her palm.

"You see," she explained, much amused at their mute astonishment, "it's nothing but water; only water that has hardened—frozen—by the cold. Did you never see that before?"

But into the three faces before her there came an expression of awe. The two men interchanged a look, and, behind his back, Hamed crossed the fingers of his left hand. As for the boy, he promptly made for the open, dropping the one word "*Es Shaitane* (Satan)," as he fled.

Sabine could not suppress a laugh at this wholly unexpected result of her lesson in physics. She certainly had been unprepared for such evidence of the crass ignorance that prevails among the Arab *fellahin*.

"Well, after all," she reflected, returning to the

patio, "they're not the only ones in the world who find it convenient to drag in a supernatural agency as the easiest way around some facts."

The unusual cold of these last few December nights was something quite unprecedented in Tunisia, Antoninus had told her, so their ignorance in this respect, at least, was entirely natural.

The excitement in the kitchen had dropped and a significant silence followed her departure. Presently Ali came out pulling his *djebba* about his shoulders, followed by Hamed, and the two left the house. Sabine concluded Ali had gone to market earlier than his usual hour and thought no further about it. Which showed her little knowledge of the ways of Arabs.

In a short time he was back. Without taking time to hang up his *djebba*, he came into the court, slipped out of his yellow *babouches*, and padded on to the patio, his pretext being an armful of orange flowers which he elaborately arranged in a glazed bowl near her. After which, "*Ya Lalla* (Madame)," he said, tentatively.

"Yes, Ali." She looked up. His face was eager with the news he had to impart.

"Mart-arfi (the wife of the master) is right," he gravely informed her. "I have been with

Hamed to the house of Bou-Amara-the-Blind-One."

"Indeed," she returned vaguely, willing to be interested. "And who may he be, your friend Bou-Amara-the-Blind-One?"

"He is the oldest man in Bemblah as well as the blindest," said Ali.

"Poor old man," she compassionated, a mile away from the blind man's relevance to the matter in hand; and because comment seemed to be expected.

"But he has seen many things, before Allah sent him darkness," Ali went on, "and he has seen water turn hard, like that, from cold. *Jelid* (ice) it is called. When he said it was *jelid*, Hamed and I both knew what it was, though not before have we seen it. Also, Bou-Amara says it sometimes, in the early morning, spreads upon the ground all white, like a thin veil. Not here. But twice on the slopes of Zaghouan, when Bou-Amara was a boy."

"And did Bou-Amara also tell you what makes it become hard—how it is that the water changes into *jelid*?" asked Sabine.

"That," Ali replied gravely, "is one of the secrets of Allah—to Him be praise! It is not good for us to ask or know such things."

"But shouldn't you like to know, don't you want to know?" she persisted.

The man shook his head. "The *moudllin* and *ôulama* study such things, not we. What it is good that we should know, they tell us."

His reserve was evident and she persisted no further.

"I'm glad, Ali, that you are satisfied about the *jelid*. You will not accuse Hamid again of breaking bottles in his cistern, I hope."

"No, *ya Lalla*." And Ali went off, annexing his slippers where he had left them; while Sabine felt how extremely fortunate for her it was that Bou-Amara, the Blind-One, had once been able to see.

She had no desire to gain repute as a sorceress with the naïve and superstitious folk about her; a thing which had threatened before when she incontinently announced, one day, an eclipse of the moon for the same night, and the moon had obligingly kept the appointment. Upon this occasion she had surprised the same furtive look of wonder as in their faces to-day, and Antoninus had then warned her. Her ready tendency was to give explanations to their ignorance as bandages to their hurts and medicines from her traveling-

case to their ailments. And he had urged her to circumspection, since, if anything happened to the babies—and something was always happening to the babies—it would be forever after imputed to her, to the *Roumiya* who had cast the evil eye or pronounced some hidden malison over them.

It was discouraging to be thus obliged to stifle all her altruistic promptings, even along these simple, practical lines of daily opportunity. As to their ignorance and calm acquiescence in its continuance, Sabine began to waver in her convictions concerning the wisdom of instruction for the masses. When summed up, what did illiteracy stand for in their case? They were content with the conditions of their lives. They accepted work with simple, unquestioning philosophy and took their *festas* with the lightheartedness of children. They had oil and bread, dates and fish for a few *sourdis*, and bounteous measure of God's sunshine for nothing. Vexatious problems they left with confidence to their betters—and they acknowledged they had betters—who possessed the inclination and brains to attend to them. And death came when Allah willed it, the portal through which they passed into the Paradise of Mohammed assured to them as true believers. Not so bad a

philosophy of life, Sabine concluded, when she contrasted with it the vision of Pat Maloney at home and his family of five in their two-room tenement; his days of unrelenting toil and pot-house relaxation; his patch of blue sky—when it was blue—recessional above the coal mine shaft of his abode; his gnawing, abiding grouch against society. And then death, as a punishment, with hell to dodge at the end. Thus viewed, the price Pat payed for his superiority over his Arabian brother, reckoned over and above Pat's personal appreciation of his own case, might come a bit too high. Perhaps the East has still a lesson to teach.

"What are you puckering your pretty brows over?" questioned Antoninus from the vestibule. "Here are visitors. May we come in? This is Mitka, the gardener."

An Arab of the better class of workmen stood hesitating in the doorway and against his knees was a child, a pretty brown-skinned, bare-faced boy of five, who led a little lamb by a cord about its neck. The lamb was snow-white, with tiny hoofs like polished agate and from the neck-ornamented many chains and amulets. The child hung back against his father who pushed him forward, saying him not to be afraid.

"This is Mifta's little boy who brings you a present of a lamb," explained Antoninus. "*Ija*, Hassan (come here)," he said to the child. "Bring the lamb to Mart-arfi."

The boy fixed his great black eyes upon her and under her reassuring smile he came forward leading the lamb. His metal anklets clinked as he walked and the animal's hoofs struck daintily over the marble in unison.

"Why, Hassan, is this pretty lamb for me?" said Sabine, patting the boy's wild-rose cheek and fondling the little animal that came confidently to her hand. The child nodded, never taking his hypnotized gaze from her.

"What's it for?" she inquired of Antoninus apart. "I'm not exactly used to getting presents of lambs. Is it symbolic or—anything?" Antoninus had clapped his hands to summon Ali to whom he threw a word and who now brought sprigs of fresh mint which Sabine fed to the pretty little creature.

"No," Antoninus replied to her question. "It's merely an attention from the gardener, as who should bring you fruit or flowers."

She slipped a bright coin into John the Baptist's little brown fist and he ran after Ali and Mifta into the kitchen where refreshments were in order.

CHAPTER VI

A TWENTIETH-CENTURY CRUSADER

MOTHER Clémens, Superioress of Saint Joseph's Convent at Bemblah, was one of those whose birthright is leadership. Destined to be a distinctive figure in any community or calling, she had become a remarkable one under the fostering exaction of monastic rule and surroundings.

Her life since girlhood had been passed in the Levant, in the ranks and habit of the missionary Order of the Apparition. She came of a noble house of Brittany where fidelity to church and king was traditional. Descended from a long line of good old fighting stock which had sent forth Red-Cross Knights as well as red-hatted Cardinals, she was thus not the first of her name and lineage to confront the infidel on the plains of Syria. For her the main issue still was the same. Methods alone had changed. And whereas the mailed and

visored Knights, her doughty Breton forebears, set spear in rest and swung the cumbrous battle axe, Mother Clémens fought not a whit less stanchly because she wielded other, more modern and more delicate weapons. In her religious garb she, too, donned good armor.

After completing her novitiate, her superiors had kept her in Jaffa long enough to wring the Khalifa's grudging consent to the building of their convent there; a concession which he even augmented, in a moment of spurtive munificence toward this valient little knight of her Order, by a gift of suitable ground for the comfortable building which ultimately replaced their initial four-roomed dwelling.

From here Sister Clémens had been sent into Tripoli, then to Mehdia and other points of Islâm, her course being marked by a wake of flourishing convents. With the completion of that in Bernblah, she now was touching her term of labor there. The little pioneer band of four sisters was at present a community of almost thirty. Their nondescript first tenement in an abandoned khan had given place to a substantiated building on the outskirts of the town, and the sturdy nun was looking each day for marching orders and her passports to new fields of service.

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Since proselytism forms no part of these good sisters' mission, their work being among the Christian children of these countries, the French government 'protects' their schools and their members who qualify rank with the public school superintendents. And thus it was that Mother Clémens was official. The prestige of her religious dress considerably heightened by the ceremonious adjuncts of black silk gloves and the attendance of one of her Sisters, she made her hierarchical visits of the new year and appeared at the stated civic functions. Here, her priority in the colony and the importance of the interests she represented were enough, apart from personal merit, to make her prominent in the French contingent.

Ungloved, Mother Clémens was a welcome visitor in every house, Moslem as well as Christian. Her position of 'holy woman,' her intimate knowledge of their language and life, but, chiefest quality, her own broad-minded personality, caused her to be accepted and revered by the Arabs. There was no grief too trivial, no affliction too sordid to enlist her instant sympathy and ministration. She shared their sorrows and understood their joys. Childless, her woman's heart yet gave quick response to the universal cry of Motherhood.



TOUCHED TO HEART BY THE WORDS, HE HAD
 BEEN HAVING PASSIONS AND FEELS OF PAIN.

With prompt intuition she had responded to Sabine's tentative advances from after her arrival in Jerusalem and the two women, products of such widely different environments, had met in the common ground of a sympathetic and cultured broad-mindedness. The natures quickly understood each other. The wise but single-hearted religious, who had wounded the longings and impressions of other women's lives, felt in the American a mind and heart on a plane with her own and removed as far as hers above the feelings and pettiness of the Levantines about them.

She stood now, in the Convent garden and turned at the sound of feet on the flagged walk, smiling at Sabine who came toward her, piloted by the little Maltese portresses.

"It's good of you to come," she said cordially. "I am looking at our lemon trees. See how they thrive. We did well to plant them on this side." She kept Sabine's loosely-gloved hand affectionately within her own while she led the way to the broad stone bench built into the low wall of the flat-roofed cistern.

"You've been digging, *ma Mère*," laughed Sa-

bine, espying the garden gloves hastily flung beside a spade planted upright in the fresh earth, and looking into her friend's flushed face.

"Well, yes," the other confessed. "I don't often get the chance. But I sent Mahoud off an hour earlier. His baby is sick and its mother needs rest."

"I wonder if there's nothing I can do for the poor mite," offered Sabine, impulsively.

"There really doesn't seem to be anything. So long as they *will* feed dried peas to a baby of four months, what is there to do? It's their fixed idea of the one way to make him big and strong. I wonder any of them manage to live. There's not so much zeal about the girl-babies so they get off usually with their lives. Mahoud's sister has succeeded in rearing two out of a family of eleven. But, I must say, these survivors are like young oxen."

A silence fell between them. After the hot day, the evening sea-breeze at last was beginning to stir through the stiff, glossy foliage of the lemon trees. The low palms lifted their trailing plumes and, one by one, the shut-up odors of the garden released their heavy fragrance. Above the white garden-wall the sapphire sea-line met the violet sky.

"Tell me about the Kadhi, *ma Mère*," Sabine presently said. "He has invited me to visit at his house, and I have decided to do so. Your works of mercy, I imagine, don't often take you there; nor is he exactly on your official visiting list, either. So it's useless, I know, to ask you to come with me. Yet without you—alone—I confess my anticipations are not entirely pleasant ones."

"I really see no reason for that," returned Mother Clémens, somewhat surprised. "I should think you would enjoy it. The Kadhi himself is interesting—typical—the truest outcome, perhaps, to be found of the present clash between modernism and the iron-bound traditions of his people. I'm mistaken if you don't find him a fascinating study."

"Oh! I admit to the fascination. If only from the shock of finding green eyes and a red beard where, obviously, one has a right to expect black and—blacker. The Kadhi is certainly not the popular idea of a blackamoor."

"He probably hasn't a drop of dark blood in his veins," laughed Mother Clémens. "It's not so curious a thing, after all, this cropping out here and there in the region about Carthage of Mauretanian families which have kept the pure Germanic

type. We mustn't forget that the Visigoths from Andalousia took Carthage and remained masters of North Africa for two centuries. And before them the people of Ifrikia were as white 'as any Roman of them all.' We can hardly call Augustine and Monica 'colored.' Of course the Arabs came later, bringing their dark stream for the first time into the Mauretanian population. But the crossing of races is not universal. I've known several families of this blond type. It is much admired among the Arabian Maurs."

"Well," said Sabine, "everything about the Kadhi is unexpected. The impression he gives is hard to define. I'm more than half inclined not to go, after all."

Her vacillation puzzled Mother Clémens, whose look grew keener as it swiftly searched her visitor's face.

"Really," she remarked lightly, "you don't seem to appreciate his invitation. Whereas the fact is, it's highly significant. Few Arab families, I can assure you, find access to his home. And among the strangers I know of absolutely none."

"But it is just that, the exclusiveness of this—distinction—which I find rather overwhelming. To be quite frank, *ma Mère*, I distrust both the

think so. But the Kadhi gives me the fearsome feeling of touching a hooded cobra." She laughed and shivered lightly.

They walked toward the gate, attended closely by the lean *slougui* hound that kept his pointed muzzle almost within the elder woman's hand. As they neared the high stone portal they stopped, moved by a common impulse, and stood looking out from the slight eminence over the ruddy sands, to the sharp outlines of the crenellated walls against the enchanted line of the Mediterranean.

Always, in the vehemence and brilliancy of the Eastern landscape, there seemed an overtouch to the Western woman, a quite indescribable quality of fervor and intensity which stirred her to almost poignant emotion; as some thrill to the blare of brazen trumpets, and others are penetrated by certain odors in nature's alembic. Now again she felt thus roused by the strained, barbaric color of the scene before her.

The deep ambers and scarlets and glowing golds of the earlier evening sky had faded to clear lemon and palest translucent green, and through this ethereal sheen great waves of softest rose held up their elfin arms of color to the zenith before they

sank their fading glory into the stretching cradle of the sea. The land took on weird high-lights of pale metallic luster while russet-twilight held the hollow places. The outlines of the garden about them blurred and broke. Warm, wavering shadows draped the staring walls and lurked behind familiar objects. And from the deepened masses of verdure, heavy, clinging odors of jasmine and tuberose and musk flower cried out their perfumed message with overpowering insistence.

The passion of the long African day had spent itself. But the luring life of night awoke, the ardent full-throated night of Crescent-crowned Islâm. It quivered in the rising hum of awakening sound that soon surged upward from the Moslem town, like a slow, insistent pounding of distant surf. Dominating all, a primeval savage call, was the throbbing pulse of the muffled tom-tom. It meant life, pleasure under the spreading stars, the call to enjoy, with the power and creed of enjoyment.

"Al-lah ou ah—ka—ba—ar!"

High above all, from the muezzin tower the long, vibrant call trailed out. And in the startled pause that followed, as if in answer, from the little chapel came the clear chime of the convent bell,

dropping like crystal pearls of purity into the fervid Moslem night.

The older woman turned. "It must all seem out of setting, strange to you," she said.

"No, *ma Mère*," Sabine answered thoughtfully. "Something responds, I cannot say what. Sometimes I seem to have lived it, dreamed it all before. Who knows? Some of my Celtic forebears really may have fought with the Giaours, you know; may have clashed scimitars in El Djezâir and even listened to the tom-tom's sob amid the lemon groves of old Granada. Who can say? The Irish have always been an adventurous people."

Her listener smiled. "Atavism let it be. But dating back much farther, I should say—perhaps to Hagar's desert tent, or even to the garden threshold where the Flaming Sword kept watch. For it is the primordial that rouses in us and lives again in the Orient."

"The spirit of Lilith, what?" laughed Sabine, putting out her hand. And the older woman added a low "God bless you" to her warm hand clasp.

A moment later, and Sabine's victoria was bowling softly homeward over the heavy sands.

CHAPTER VII

THE KADHI'S WIFE

THE projected visit to the Kadhi's house was made soon after.

The way to it led off from the more frequented part of town into a very labyrinth of zigzag byways shut in by interminable white, blank walls, on through the searing light, then under overhanging archways that spanned the cramped streets with cool, cavelike blocks of shadow.

The heat was oppressive in spite of the early hour. The fierce sun eagerly lapped up all freshness from the air until it was dry and heady and swam before the eyes in giddy, dilating circles. Sabine rested her fingers an instant on her own strong, quick pulse, smiling up in answer to Antoninus's anxious look.

"Ill? No indeed. Just the contrary," she reassured him. "I feel, if anything, too well. What is it Antoninus? I wonder what I have

been doing all these years until now. I feel that I'm just beginning to live; that for the first time I'm coming into my own, and can understand life's meaning and intensity."

He nodded back understandingly. "It's the way with us all," he said. "It is your response to the sun-call, your 'baptism of fire,' so to speak."

It was true. She felt an immense physical exhilaration, an energy and nervous responsiveness quite new to her.

"Most northerners," he went on, "cannot bear up under it, but wilt off into anæmia; while you, now, are of different stuff. You've almost caught the full swinging pulse of the East. I'm proud of you."

"I'm proud of myself then," she laughed back.

"People come here for a few days," he continued "touch at Tangiers, at Tunis, as so many duty calls mapped out in their Mediterranean cruise and which they snatch regretfully from the comforts of their yacht. They stay just long enough to miss the sea-breeze or catch the sirocco and thankfully hurry away, carrying with them abiding memories of the 'bold and busy flea,' of unspeakable raucous odors, of unclean streets and Maltese *frittura*; and, the inevitable yellow *babouches* and

tinsel-bedizened morocco *tabourets*. And they have solved the problems of Moorish life and are prepared to pronounce upon the merits and conditions of North Africa." He threw out his hand in a little gesture, deprecating, yet amused. "A Riverside mansionaire once, at dinner, asked me how long my last stay in Tunisia had been. I told him seven years. 'Well, mine was only seven days,' he said, 'and, please God, the experience shan't be repeated.' I asked him what had been his especial experience. He had no experience, simply the general impression of flies and reek, red-lidded, lousy beggars and the unspeakable stomach dance. His very word, my dear"—something in Sabine's look checking him an instant, "I remember it for I'd never heard it before. Isn't it good English? The founder of the Riverside dynasty was not above criticism in that respect, I remember."

"Oh! yes, it's English," she answered.

"Well," he went on, "I could quite understand it was very nasty, and I told him so frankly. "Try the skin of this peach," I said, leaning over. "No? You surprise me. You really don't like it?" . . . He stared a moment, then laughed. "Well," I said, "come to me next time you

visit Tunis. I promise you shall taste the peach."

Sabine looked at him, smiling, yet reflective. "You were right, Antoninus; it *is* worth tasting."

"Eat it all, dear," he retorted, "and throw away the stone if you come to one. All African peaches don't have them."

Laughing, he raised the heavy iron knocker of the door before them. Another moment and they passed into the cool obscurity within.

The small square chamber or atrium in which they found themselves was like that of all other well-to-do houses, with stone-flagged floor and walls tiled high in beautiful turquoise and yellow. Across the entire back was built in a low stone couch, covered with its square of spotless matting, where the cross-legged porter throned. At each side were large, arched doors, one leading to the household apartments, which correspond to the impenetratum of the Romans, for there is no harem, properly speaking, in Tunisian houses. The other door opened to the Kadhi's reception-room and office; and into this they were shown by the huge Arab porter.

Here, the morning's business had evidently been despatched for, besides the Kadhi himself, there

were only his secretary and another *effendi*, both lawyers of high standing in the town.

They rose at sight of the visitors and the soft-footed servant advanced stools, while the Kadhi came forward to meet them. The usual grave and elaborate salutations followed with, however, more than the usual show of cordiality; for the two *effendis* were well-known to Antoninus and had already met his wife. The first polite inquiries and compliments included her, of course, after which conversation continued easily in Arabic between the men, while the servant poured burning coffee into the tiny cups and placed orange-flower water and cigarettes on the low inlaid tables. Comfits he laid beside the lady's cup, rose-flavored fruit-pastes cut in small squares, and honey balls made of ground almonds and pistache-nuts rolled in floured sugar. A low command from the Kadhi, and the man withdrew, evidently to announce their coming to the household.

Sabine warily sipped her coffee in silence, not making the effort to follow the conversation. It was astonishing how the tablespoonful of thick, aromatic and quite scalding liquid refreshed and cooled one after the heat.

When she laid down her cup the Kadhi rose, as

did the others, and excusing himself to them, he courteously invited Sabine to accompany him, leading the way across the vestibule to the *h'arrem* (forbidden) part of the house.

The door closed behind them and they stood at once in the patio, the heart of all Moorish dwellings.

There was nothing exceptional or imposing here. The place was bare of ornament, marble-floored and wainscoted in gay colored tiles as usual. It was quite open to the sky, admitting a flood of blinding light. A superb grape-vine, that sent its twisted branches over one entire side, alone cut the glare, making a broad bower of cool green and pendant purple clusters. From this patio various doors opened off into different parts of the house. Through one, a narrow arched passage gave glimpse beyond of the huge water-jar fastened against the wall, the yellow and green glazed *kous-koussi* bowls and gargoulettes of purest Etruscan shapes that showed where the kitchen lay. Several women, wearing the dark blue *fouta* of the Bemblah house servant, moved about their tasks within call. Nearer, on the left, a vast ornate door, flanked by broad windows with wrought-iron grilles, opened into a room which occupied all that

side of the patio and was bedroom, living-room, even dining-room all in one, for the Moorish matron who happened to occupy it. Toward this the Kadhi turned. But before he could reach it, the door opened and Zorah, his wife, appeared between the parted draperies. She advanced a step, then stood before her husband with down-cast eyes, as is the custom, a mute and lovely figure.

Sabine literally caught her breath. She was all unprepared for such beauty. Braving the search-light of the pitiless Tunisian sunshine, it had nothing to fear. In it, the woman's low-parted, heavy hair shone like burnished ebony. Against the somber blue of the clinging *fouta*, the perfect texture of cheek and throat and arms gleamed with startling brilliancy, as if a warm light burned behind the camellia skin; and the straight, sensuous face, crossed by the dark sweep of the trailing lashes, veiled a mysterious charm.

The splendid pose and faultless modeling of the lithe figure were heightened by the severe lines of the Arab woman's every-day dress she wore, so different, in its plastic simplicity, to the bulging folds and bazaar ornaments of her Turkish sisters. She held her little daughter by the hand, a kerchief-

headed mite of four, whose heavy silver anklets clinked with every movement of her tiny bare feet. Standing there in the garish day, she looked the ripe perfection of luscious bloom, suggesting to her enthralled visitor the scarlet pomegranate's honeyed fruit, or some full-blown damask rose which diamonds yet with early dews.

Sabine pulled herself together, as she herself should have expressed it. Had she been staring? and open-mouthed, perhaps? She was uncomfortably conscious of the possible lapse of several moments. She advanced now, with outstretched hand.

"Ah! this is Madame. I am very pleased to meet you." The trite phrase struck her as absurdly inappropriate.

Ben Zegri gave his veiled-eyed wife a monosyllabic order, and Sabine thought of the magic shibboleth that freed the spellbound Princess as, at his words, she lifted her slumbrous eyes to her visitor's face, and a smile showed the dazzling pearl line between her full lips. She took the extended hand—a little awkward at the unfamiliar hand-clasp—and her hesitating, almost mistrustful look brightened at the frank friendliness she encountered.

Sabine turned impulsively to the Kadhi, speaking in low, eager tones.

"Madame is very, very beautiful."

It was a quick, spontaneous tribute given in simple justice. But she checked herself abruptly, arrested by something she saw in the man's face. She looked at him curiously. It was a fleeting expression of triumph, the irrepressible exultation of the trainer in his domination of some beautiful, subjugated wild thing; a cold, almost cruel look of mastery. Slowly she turned without awaiting his reply, and stooped to caress the child who threw an apprehensive glance to her father before she finally yielded her little brown, henna-stained fingers into the strange lady's keeping. Sabine could feel where they were roughened at the tips. She held them up. "How is this? This baby—does she already know how to sew?"

The mite nodded her kerchiefed head with grown-up pride. Yes, she sewed for her *benaiya* (doll). Already she knew many embroidery stitches. Soon she may help make under linen for the little sister. She ran to fetch the *benaiya*, the clumsy rag-doll. Sabine looked pityingly after the quaint, wee figure with its earnest and precocious baby face.

And the little sister? She was over there in the *mra's* arms, a rounded mass of dimpled flesh. Sabine wondered how short a period might be expected to elapse before the nursing bottle should be superseded by the needle, and if, haply, there were no intermediate 'rompers' stage for little well-born Moslem maids.

The Kadhi looked bored. Evidently, too much domesticity was being thrust upon him. He invited the guest to be seated, taking himself the remaining chair, and Zorah—stood, slightly but significantly behind her lord and a little to the left.

The visitor spoke out, indiscreetly she knew, but advisedly.

"But you have no chair—there is no chair for Madame."

"She does not sit," coldly, from Ben Zegri. "If you permit it, she will show you her clothes, linen and stuffs from El Djezair (Algiers), and jewels, uncut stones from Stamboul." The American lady must possess some of the vulnerabilities of her sex, he not unnaturally reasoned.

Already, the two *mras* were carrying from the bedroom the heavy green and gold lacquered coffer that is so important a feature in the Arab woman's wedding outfit. Poor Ben Zegri was looking, as

no doubt he felt, unspeakably bored. And Sabine herself had seen enough of Moorish gala trappings, with their uniform resemblance to Byzantine church vestments, to have no real interest in the proffered display.

She was about to formulate some polite excuse, when the topmost garment arrested her. It was a faded pink taffeta ball-gown, unmistakably from the ateliers of the Galeries Lafayette or the Bon Marché, with beruffled train and a twenty-inch bodice. Incongruous beyond words amid its sandal-scented, exotic surroundings, it looked the veriest rag of faded frumpery.

Zorah stepped forward and took it from the *mra's* hands, proudly smoothing out the faded creases. It was evidently her most cherished possession.

"It is a present," she said. "It comes from Francia. I have never worn it, though I have tried to, often." Sabine's glance took in the Greek goddess form before her and she was not surprised. "It needs other things to go with it, undergarments that we do not have. We cannot look like the *Roumi* ladies."

She spoke deprecatingly and looked timidly, wistfully toward her husband. But the flick of the

lash came remorselessly. At his cold, green stare the womanly yearning sank back under cover of the veiling lids.

Suddenly Sabine felt a wave of hot indignation surge up from somewhere. She did not venture to speak. She understood quite enough of Arabic and Arabian customs by this time to be able to follow all she had heard, more explicitly, all she had seen; and she divined the tragedy hovering over this woman's life. It was written large in her obvious failure to make good, as shown by the presence of the two little girls where boys were so manifestly indicated; in her husband's sullen resentment of a condition of affairs for which, clearly, she alone could be held responsible.

She knew that female children, at best, are tolerated in a Moslem household. Rarely are they welcomed. Often are they intruders. The blessing of Allah is with male posterity. Only in her son's house do honor and dignity await the Mohammedan woman, here only may she rule. What, then, does life hold out to the mother of daughters!

Zorah well knew the penalty of her defection. The ambitious Kadhi would, of course, have sons, though she should not be their mother. And with

the withdrawal of her husband's favor, the sun of the Muslima's life has, indeed, set. Like so many others of Islâm's daughters, this superb woman, in the ripe beauty of her eighteen years, would shortly sink to the rôle of discredited wife. Supplanted, she yet must hold herself at her lord's commands, for she was beautiful. She would see her little daughters overlooked, superseded in their father's house, the implied servants of another's whims. No wonder that the Moslem wives stretch out supplicating arms to Allah. Prayer with the true believer takes the form of invocation and worship, never of petition, since the word itself 'Moslem' means 'resigned to God's will.' But, fatalist in all else, the fiat that refuses to her male children is too bitter to the woman, too cruel in its consequences, for her to meekly bow her head and say '*Maktoub*' ('It is written').

Sabine came to her feet. She had had enough. She gave her shoulder squarely to the lord Kadhi, good manners or no good manners. Her heart ached at the injustice, the cruelty of the whole thing. She felt an insane desire to strike at the Kadhi, at this monstrous Islâmism and, through it, at the whole network which had knitted through the ages about the weaker; until men at last had



come to lose sight of that broadest basic fact, the fundamental right in nature to liberty of development in each individual instead of in a class. She didn't reason it out. Indeed, she had never known she felt this way. It was her several centuries' start of the other woman in the experiences of emancipation that upflamed in revolt and championship.

She found Zorah's hand through a fumble of pink silk and held it firmly, while she gathered up her straggling Arabic for a determined effort.

"Thou art far more beautiful than the *Roumi* women can ever be, O my sister. They have nothing thou mayest envy."

She groped sadly for her sentences, stumbling over the stilted pronoun, and she felt Ben Zegri's eyes riveted to her face with disconcerting intensity, but she went bravely on. "Great is Allah's gift of beauty, given only to the few; and this he has given to thee. Be sure he will not refuse thee other blessings." An instant longer she looked into the glowing eyes, then dropped the hand and lifted her own to her lips and forehead. "*Es salaamou*," she said quietly.

She stooped to the child who gave a shy smile of delight at the bright coin she pressed into its little brown palm. It was a ten-franc gold piece

with a hole in it and bore the effigy of the Frankish king Leopold II., *Roi des Belges*. And so venerable were the graven lineaments with the long beard, that easily they might be taken for those of the lord Prophet himself.

She patted the baby's cheek as she passed and moved quickly across the patio without further care for the Kadhi. She should never see Zorah again, that was probable; and she was in no mood for parrying the subtleties of Ben Zegri's insistent glances. She wanted to get out; to where this man was not master; to accustomed conditions; and — well, yes — to Antoninus's sheltering presence.

But in two swift strides Ben Zegri caught up with her, and his hand was on the door as she reached it.

"You are mistaken." He spoke in French and measured out each word, with low, vibrant intentness. "Some *Roumi* women there are who are very beautiful—with the beauty of Allah's promise that is from within. But their loveliness is not bought. It is freely given." She could feel his burning gaze through her drooped lids and she dared not raise them. The low vehemence of his words swept on and he was trembling. "Oh!

what must be love—love such as theirs! *They* are not slaves!”

She flung up her head, meeting his look squarely. “And whose the fault?” she flashed back, and stopped. For again the beryl magnet of his eyes caught her glance and fastened it to their own. As before, through fathomless ice-green deeps, the sluggish sea-serpent seemed to uncoil his stealthy spell, winding it in molten gyves about her. And the white flame of his fang seemed to bore its seething way through her senses and volition until they swirled to unresisting vapor within her. She struggled to throw off the fatal obsession, but she felt things slipping from her, and Ben Zegri’s next words came remote as from some hollow place, but distinct; and immutable as dripping stalactites.

“Listen,” he said, and she knew that he had taken her hand. “Once in each cycle of the life of man, so says the Hadith, comes his chance for happiness or woe; once only. And while all else is written from the beginning on the scrolls of time, there is left one page whereon each is permitted to trace, himself, the record of his choice. The timorous hug sorrow. And for them is flung in pity the promised rainbow—bridge of tears—to span the way to Allah’s seven-stepped throne. But the

strong seize empire over joy and grief alike, and they hold their own, even if, like the patriarch of old, they must wrest it from the Angel of the Scrolls. What are laws but puny safeguards for the timorous, to be broken by the strong when they bar the way to that happiness which is theirs, by choice and rapturous gift! To what end were freedom, our birthright, if we may not claim and bestow the highest, the divinest within us, love? Love that defies the confines of space and time and changes Allah's cold abode into the rhapsody of the Prophet's Paradise!"

His voice shook with a wooing tremor, and his rare smile became alluringly beautiful. Irresistibly the hypnotic charm of his words bore her along with dizzy impetuosity. "With you" But he hesitated, faltered. His shining look an instant left her face, diverted to something behind her. Then he passed his hand slowly across his eyes. And Sabine gave a great gasp. It was as if a window had been thrown open. With the dazed movement of somnipathy she turned, to find Mother Clémens beside her.

Firmly and coldly the nun looked the Kadhi between the eyes, and Ben Zegri returned her gaze steadily, his face aglow with a new emotion.

"I love her, my Mother," he said swiftly in Arabic. "Is there wrong in that? She may choose; it is the law. You know I can make her happy."

"You forget," returned the nun gently. "She is a *Roumi*, and *Roumis* may wed but once."

He wheeled toward Sabine, mutely searching her eyes for confirmation of the words. And she gave it, meeting him bravely, but with an immense relief at her heart. For now, with increased understanding, came her pardon of this man whom she might still respect. Her lips were yet white, for the strain had been unmistakable, and she felt curiously limp and soulless. But a womanly sweetness shone in the violet eyes, softening her reply to the waiting man.

"Even were it not our law, my choice is already made."

Poor Ben Zegri, Kadhi of Bemblah! It was the ban of Islâm, despotic love. He was hungering for what might never be, for the supremest joy that is not for the followers of the Prophet, the rapture of love's free largess. Sabine understood and, womanlike, was sorry for him. As if loving her gave him right to the balm of her pity. How far indeed was she then from plumbing to the

depths of passion that smolder in the bosom of this sunsteeped land.

Silently they crossed into the room beyond, where the figure of Antoninus was to her as sunshine after prison walls.

They made their adieux to the Kadhi and walked back through the tortuous streets to the Gourbi gate where Mother Clémens left them, refusing their insistence upon accompanying her. Sabine felt tired. A sudden lassitude weighted her steps—the heat, no doubt.

“How far away is America, Antoninus?” she asked him drearily. “Let us go home.”

He laughed lightly, reassuringly, though his eye was quick to note her unaccustomed pallor. “That is where we *are* going, dear; though not quite so far as America.”

And how dear and cool and natural and safe it seemed when they reached it. How convincingly familiar and of their world was the table's snowy disk with its flowers, its discreet gleam of crystal and silver. Even the piled-up pomegranates wore a look of Gotham in their cut-glass Tiffany bowl.



CHAPTER VIII

FATE MAKES *VOLTE-FACE*

ONE day, Antoninus came in with news of the Kadhi's second marriage and, later on, Mother Clémens gave the particulars.

This time, as before, Ben Zegri had chosen his wife from a distant village. Her family being rich, he had given only a small sum in dower, the honor of his alliance counting in lieu of the usual monetary compensation. There was no official wedding feast in the Kadhi's house, this being the exclusive appurtenance of a first marriage; and the closed carriage that brought the bride and her servant that evening passed almost unrecognized through the city gates.

Sabine's pity stirred at each detail, so trivial and prosaic in the recountal yet so dramatic in fact and consequence. But the event produced no ripple on the surface of the Mussulman world about them. It was generally understood that

the Kadhi had reason to be dissatisfied with certain conditions in his household. It was natural that he should seek to remedy them; and this was purely his own affair. The Kadhi, presumably, knew what he was about. And if Sabine was sometimes haunted by thoughts of Zorah, her increasing knowledge of the life about her brought a radical modification in her appreciations. Her horizon had notably shifted. The centuries-old conditions here were little changed, and fitted well with the centuries-old creed and ethics. She found these women, untouched as they were by the mental unrest of any intellectual awakening, satisfied with their lot, happy in their homes, childish in their pleasures, while living on, from day to day, the irresponsible child life, with its passionate, short-lived griefs, its keen delights, its reckless insouciance. Their social and domestic duties were simplified to the elementary—who shall not say highest—terms, to appear always beautiful in their husband's eyes, and bear him healthy male children. And in this lay the *summum bonum* of their lives. Such was the rule. But the exceptions, because of these untrained, elemental natures, became terrible, often, in their abandonment of triumph or despair.

The passing months held many instances, an ample store of experience for one given to an analytic trend of mind. Sabine lived them through as she might the thousand-and-second Arabian Night, her ardent mind seizing upon the often sordid facts in the everyday world about her to weave them into a fairy fabric of her own imagining. She visited the wealthy Arab families in their broad white villas, that gleamed like nesting doves amid the dark foliage on the soft slopes of the *sebkha*, that wide stretch of silver, salt sand, that seemed to her like some beautiful mirage-haunted dream-land. Here she was made welcome. She saw handsome women of forty, surrounded by grown sons with their wives and children, governing their extensive households and enjoying the confidence of their husbands in the rare intervals of their presence; women 'whose hair weighed more than their brains' undoubtedly, but in whom the Lucretian virtues burned brightly. Surely, here was a picture of home life that had its prototype in all lands. She did not realize her own immense adaptability, made easier by her growing mastery of Arabic, nor her personal charm that drew these people to her and made them give to this daughter of the *Roumis* of their best. They all knew Anto-

ninus by hearsay, also by sight, indulged in from behind closed lattices. His open devotion to his wife and constant attendance on her excited their comment, even their wondering envy, although they could not understand its place in their own lives.

All this time, she had kept clear of the Kadhi's path and Antoninus tacitly aided her. His hawk eye could catch the distant flutter of the spotless *djebba* in the street or on the beach, long before she could do so. She was absurd, of course, to have any feeling one way or the other about this second marriage. There were analogous situations all about them. Zorah must live what 'is written,' as did her mother's mother's mothers before her; as the long train of succeeding Moslem women would continue to do, until the hand should reach down to grasp the key, and the prophecies of Islâm be fulfilled.

Well, there was something else. For, with the memory of the woman's beseeching eyes, was that of Ben Zegri's low, hot words spoken at the door of the harem. . . . Antoninus and he continued on cordial terms of truce. Let it rest at that.

Again it was a summer's day. There had been three days of sirocco, and the normal July heat felt

cool and almost refreshing after its fierce Saharan breath. Upon the drowse of the heavy afternoon air came the dull, full throbbing of a distant tom-tom, followed soon by the shrill, high notes of the reed-pipe and the drone of a *ceramella*.

They came nearer, and Sabine pushed out one of the green lattices of her closed balcony, and leaned over to catch sight of the musicians as they turned the corner. An augmenting jostle of color followed in their harmonious wake which gradually formed into a good-sized procession. Several professional criers chanted forth nasal information during breathing spaces in the prolonged piping; and the straggling cohort of street urchins that trailed behind kept up a lusty and continuous cheering quite irrespective of measure. At the doors of the various cafés along the line of march, the procession halted, and the *kawadjis* emerged with their long-handled copper vessels and poured *kawa* into the dust of the street in sign of abundance and prosperity.

"What is it?" asked Sabine of Antoninus, who came out, cigarette in hand. He was followed by a tall young Arab richly dressed and having the distinctive air that marks the man of breeding everywhere. Both men listened.

"They are crying the birth of a son in the Kadhi's house," Antoninus replied. "What else is that they say, Mabrouk? It sounds to me like varied repetitions of the same theme."

"So it is. With multiplied invocations for added blessings upon Ben Zegri and all his posterity."

The young man stood behind Sabine watching, with an absent eye, the moving lines below until they disappeared around the nearest corner. Then he followed Antoninus indoors where they resumed their places on the divan that encircled three sides of the spacious, shaded room.

"Hum—mh! That will mean something to Ben Zegri," mused Antoninus through the fragrant haze of smoke. He lazily followed the direction of Mabrouk's glance, which rested, as he quietly smoked, on Sabine's motionless figure beyond the open French window. He was aware of the young fellow's admiration for his wife, quite understood it, and approved his good taste.

She had remained on the balcony and continued to lean over, looking intently into the street, but seeing only Zorah—Zorah of the burnished hair, the polished ivory skin and ebon curtained eyes—as she had first seen her in the sunlight on that

morning in July. What had these intervening months meant for her? Through what sharp steepes of bitterness had her path wound up to its present Calvary of renunciation? She pictured the drooping humility of the once proud pose, the dark eyes through their mists of sorrow, the——

"Dear Lady, is it so pretty then, the little, dirty street?" It was Mabrouk's soft voice that spoke behind her, and at it, she turned impulsively as to one who understands.

"I was thinking, Mabrouk. With all this rejoicing in the Kadhi's house I can't help remembering that there is one, at least, with a heavy heart."

"I know it," he returned. "You mean his wife, the first wife." His eyes looked off reflectively over the square, white roofs and dwelt quietly on the near, ever blue mystery of the sea, then came back with a swift look into her sensitive face. "Why think of that, Madame? Our Arab ladies are not like you, like the French, or English women. They accept these things. It is their life. They know, they can dream of no other." He shrugged deprecatingly. "A jewel, an anklet, and they dry their eyes and are satisfied and happy once more."

"Can you believe it?" she exclaimed. She recalled Zorah in her simple dress without ornament and shook her head. "This time, I fear it is not so. Would that it were. Even with your countrywomen, there are disappointments and sorrows. I am sure, that jewels cannot compensate nor console."

"With some, perhaps," he returned. "But the Meslema must live 'what is written,' as we all must."

She led the way indoors, where Antoninus was giving directions about suitable gifts to go with their congratulations to the Kadhi.

"Here, Ali," she said. "This also is to go, for the mother of the boy." She handed him an embroidered scarf with long fringed ends that she had bought in the Rue St. Honoré. She remembered Zorah's joy in the pink taffeta creation. Would this gift to the other prove an object of envy to her, she wondered.

Decidedly, the whole thing was becoming fantastic, an obsession. There was nothing for it but to put Zorah, with her tragic eyes and destinies, out of her mind, as she valued its peace; and this wise course she determined forthwith to adopt.

But that evening as they lingered with Mother

Clémens in the convent garden, Antoninus spoke of the all-important event in the Kadhi's family.

"Yes, it means much to Ben Zegri's ambitions," said Mother Clémens. "With a son, he will reach high with the reactionaries in the Beylikal councils. And I am sincerely glad, too, for Zorah's sake. She deserves her happiness."

"Zorah, *ma Mère?*" cried Sabine.

"Undoubtedly," assented her friend. "Oh! you did not know? . . . Yes, it is the first wife who is the mother of the new baby."

"Allah is merciful," declared Antoninus.

CHAPTER IX

NEARING THE RAPIDS

THE seasons followed fast for Sabine. The river of her emotional life swept on, deep and rapid in its course, leaving her breathless, looking back now at the distance she had covered in these two short years. Daily simple events had piled their store of experience naturally, amazingly even, when viewed in retrospect. Each day moved on to its allotted place in the ordered sequence, it might seem, of an evolving game, like pawns upon some chess-board, played by a master hand; and this hand she could not but realize was the Kadhi's. His opponent—was it Antoninus, or—herself?

Ben Zegri by this time had become a not infrequent visitor at their house. This in itself was a master-stroke of achievement on his part and against all precedent in the Moslem world. Yet it had followed easily and simply. A passing

indisposition of Antoninus had furnished the occasion which the Kadhi had promptly improved by making inquiries in person. Antoninus received him, as was his way, with wide and unaffected hospitality. Gifts of fruit from the Kadhi's gardens followed at discreet intervals. Then, one day, Ben Zegri, joining Antoninus in the street, continued with him to his door and, at the latter's invitation to enter, he dismissed his suite and followed into the house. He did not see Sabine upon either of these occasions. Upon his third visit, however, when the two men had smoked and talked a while,—there was deep congeniality between them,—Antoninus bade a servant ask his wife if she would receive them. She sent back word she should be pleased to join them where they were, and she came at once.

It is safe to say that this was Ben Zegri's first drawing-room experience; that never before had he talked freely to a woman and this, too, in the pleased and acquiescent presence of her husband. And, given their two personalities, for Ben Zegri the situation held its decided thrill. However, he was equal to it. He was perfect. Indeed it were difficult to be otherwise in presence of Antoninus's easy lead and practiced form. Unconsciously,

both men gave their measure under the stimulus of Sabine's slight reserve.

When, after a little time, she left them, she frankly gave her hand to the Kadhi. In her own house she was on Occidental ground. Antoninus flicked amused eyelids. The poor Kadhi would have an extra ablution to perform after that unritual contact before next muezzin-call to prayer.

After her departure the two men talked on, Ben Zegri now satisfied as to his host's attitude. Truly were these *Roumis* astonishing! When he rose to go, Antoninus did not summon any of the servants to attend him. He did not wish to emphasize to his Moslem followers what might be unusual in their Kadhi's conduct. Ben Zegri understood and was grateful.

He came again—one day when Antoninus was preparing to go out. Ali brought him into the patio where they were, Sabine distracting her leisure with some needlework thing. After some little talk, Antoninus excused himself to his wife, begged Ben Zegri not to interrupt his visit, then mounted his horse and rode off.

Thus left in unexpected tête-à-tête, Ben Zegri showed, perhaps, the least trace of self-conscious-



ness, his hostess none. His recovery was immediate. Evidently, the situation was an accepted and natural one in this strange *Roumi* world by whose rigid canons, he himself, he saw, was pledged in some iron way to a strict line of conduct entailing no abuse of it. Thus he mused, talking quietly the while with the charm he so eminently possessed and knew so well how to intensify when he chose. He listened intently to her even, well-bred voice. His eyes narrowed as he guardedly studied her cold, confident face for any evidence of self-consciousness. He could detect none. It was without a tremor. He might have been the wooden block supporting the mauresque arch beside her. Still musing, he took his leave, Ali showing him to the outer door with copious *salamaleiks*. And he smiled slowly as he folded his white *bernous* about him and turned quietly into a side street.

But Sabine gave a great sigh when he was gone, a sigh of distinct relief. If she had succeeded in keeping from him the disarray of her own feelings, it was at the cost of the utmost exertion of her self-restraint. Now she shrank with the recoil, and the freed blood surged to her face in protest. Yet, repudiate, deny it as she may, the attraction

was there; a great undertow that drew her surely to it even while her reason and pride and determination flung out detaining arms. What was there about this man that compelled her? Again the old thrall caught her, the winning, imperious power she had felt a year before. And with it that other something added, pungent cold and paralyzing and green—yes, it translated itself into color, into green—like a long mint draught of clouded absinthe. She tried to shake the impression from her. But it did not go as before with the withdrawal of Ben Zegri's presence. Persistent, it clung about her senses and possessed her will; and she thought at last, with unconscious abandonment, of Ben Zegri.

Antoninus came in. She hardly heard the click of his spurs as he crossed the patio. And she did not notice the keen, enveloping glance he gave her, nor, following it, the look of pain that came into his face. He went to change his clothes, while she moved about much as usual, but restlessly, almost mechanically, and absorbed. Coming back, he did not intrude upon her mood nor expect her to act a sprightly part to please him. The privacy of a human soul was something he respected. It was only in the soothing atmosphere he created by his

tactful silence, by his affectionate attentions and little accustomed cares for her comfort, that she felt his ready tender of sympathy and support, if need she had of help from him. She realized all this, the strength and delicacy of his love for her, with an answering heart leap, a tender gratitude as well. And she found herself, at last, as if awakening, and smiling back to him across the table's soft light and fragrance. The obsession of the past had slipped from her. The warmth of his dominating love and personality acted upon her like a fine cordial in its counteractive and invigorating quality. And later, on the terrace in the starlight, she told him, with oh! such infinite unburdenment—and some shamefacedness also, in the dark—all about her feeling for Ben Zegri.

Whatever were his own feelings, Antoninus heard her as might a father confessor, with the impersonality of complete self-elimination which alone could satisfy his sense of entire fairness to her.

It was characteristic of him that no word of raillery escaped him, no belittling of her sentiments as extravagant or morbid or imagined or negligible. Above all, no suggestion from him of blame. Woman's 'fancies' have been potent factors in

the making of the world's history. He felt simply that the fight was on between himself and Ben Zegri. They should at last lock swords in what remains ever the most vital issue between men since the race began. And Antoninus was ready to put his weapons to the touch against the other's; the Occident's inviolable principle of individual freedom against the inbred theory of personal restraint and compulsory selection of the East.

While this flashed upon his mind as they talked, no word of his betrayed it. Then was no time to lay bare his soul. And she went to bed comforted, reassured, anchored anew to what was real and sane in the mass of vibrating sensation within her.

But Antoninus continued long on the terrace communing with many cigarettes and the stars. And before they paled in the east, he found his horse and rode away under the olive trees.

The next morning, Sabine found him waiting for her to go down to the sea as usual for their daily dip. That morning bathe in the great mother-of-pearl tub of the Mediterranean—all sheen and soft glisten in the hour-old sun—was a daily joy.

Throughout the long days that followed there was no change in Antoninus. He abated no whit of his affectionate attention and evidence of con-

stant care for her. But all the while he observed her closely, reading her with the insight that love alone gives, until he was satisfied of her recovered poise, coming from recovered confidence in herself; above all, of her unruffled and natural bearing in Ben Zegri's presence.

Then, one day, he went to find Mother Clémens.

CHAPTER X

IN THE CONVENT GARDEN

THERE may be found, perhaps, one man in a thousand who will change no tittle of the principles he has hitherto maintained and refuse to profit by the axiom that circumstances alter cases when it comes to his own case. Without pulling down the pillars of our ethical structure, we yet give them a twist to make them fit the measurements of our individual roof. So apt is the personal issue to make unsuspecting casuists of us.

The one thousandth man, it would seem, was Madrillos. He had the cardinal defect of a certain mental rigidity—call it plain honesty—in spite of personal bias and the flexibility of his reasoning processes. Cardinal, because the happiness, as well as efficiency of a man's life may hinge on the capacity of adjusting his mental yard-stick to the different sides of the hourly equation. That a

thing is because it should be, in the logical workings of human happenings, is a slippery guide-rope to hold for the tryer-out of theories, as Antoninus, no doubt more than once, had experienced. But to unswerving convictions he added a ruthless courage in putting them to the touch regardless of the outcome, even if thereby he risked his all in all as in the issue at present before him.

He rang at the Convent gate and the little portress brought him to the garden where he found Mother Clémens.

For an hour they talked, seated on the stone bench under the lemon trees. And the low tones of Antoninus's voice were very earnest, those of the religious no less so. When together they came down the shadow-flecked walk, neither spoke and their faces were equally grave and preoccupied. At length, halting near the portal, Mother Clémens raised her eyes and there was anxiety, even sadness in them.

"You are convinced it is for the best, I know," she said, "but is there no other way?"

"No. I can think of none other. She needs no material protection—I know Ben Zegri—and my love, even, cannot protect her from herself. Strength must come to her from within. Once for

all she must read her own heart aright, uninfluenced by me, unrestrained by my presence. She will not be the first woman to discover, perhaps, that what she has hitherto taken for a great love, may be only its foreshadowing. What am I, what is any man, to set himself athwart the path of a destined love!" He said it humbly.

"But she does not love Ben Zegri in the least!" exclaimed the nun with emphasis. "I am convinced of that. All this is nothing but a strange attraction, an hallucination which it were unwise to exaggerate. It will leave her as it has come."

"And do you think I could bear it?" he returned vehemently, looking down into her troubled eyes. "Do you think I could bear to feel, even granting she loves me, that any man in life—or after it—should ever hold her like this? I cannot believe you think so, *ma Mère*."

She sighed involuntarily—an acquiescence. She was deeply moved as well as startled by the situation thus unexpectedly developed.

"I, too, believe she does not love Ben Zegri," he resumed, more calmly. "But the presence, even possibility of question in her own mind is the admission of weakness, of limitation in her love for me. The fault is not hers. It is I who have been

found wanting. I have not succeeded in filling her heart, and that is what I undertook to do. In marrying me she accepted me as her measure of love in life, all that she may know of the most vital of human emotions." He broke off abruptly, and looked away over the white roof-line below them. "Does a man, I wonder, think of what he agrees to when he promises to satisfy the whole claim of a woman to this first and highest happiness? And he does so promise when he exacts her vow of fidelity. Otherwise he would be acquiescing in the enormous injustice of imposing upon her to live her life a starveling in the measure of rightful emotional experience, cut off, consequently, from the means necessary to her fullest development."

The nun was silent. Antoninus, too, lapsed into the quiet of his own thoughts. It was the former who presently spoke.

"May it not look like abandonment of her, even a surrender—pardon me—on your part?" she insisted.

"No." His answer was unhesitating. "I have thought of that. My house, my name are hers. She disposes absolutely of my position and influence here, and whatever she does is endorsed by me in advance and consequently must remain

unquestioned by others. In consenting to come here, she knew that I should be able to guarantee to my wife entire liberty of action, and that the usages and restrictions of the Levantine world should not touch her. It must be understood, *and I particularly want Ben Zegri to understand*, that she has authority and independence of herself and is not in my tutelage, much less under my mastery."

"I see."

The emphasis that had creased his forehead cleared away and he looked up with a slightly ironical smile. "Yes, I know Ben Zegri. Centuries ago there was kinship between us." He shrugged whimsically in answer to her look. "Well, there's no reason why there might not be, you know. We Spaniards are more or less grafted on Saracen stock. My forebears were Maures in Aragon who remained there and became Christians when Granada yielded. His were Maures in Andalusia who continued true to Islâm and left Spain. By which, you see, he must be reckoned the better man of the two. It depends upon how you differentiate between the terms 'convert' and 'renegade,' as applied to the same act."

"I devoutly hope you haven't been treating Ben Zegri to 'my cousin,'" she exclaimed. It was

like Antoninus's thirst for fairness to unearth such genealogical roots.

"No," he said. "We've got to draw the line taut between ourselves and the paynim. But it doesn't hurt to know the genesis of things. Ben Zegri is mighty near being an old Castilian; and is a gentleman at heart, I believe."

"Yes, but also a Moslem. And, necessarily, with a Moslem's ideas of women."

"Which is my very reason for going, *ma Mère*. He believes in woman's inherent dependence and inferiority, her caprice and general untrustworthiness; and so in the necessity of using coercion and restraint with her. He would naturally ascribe a rebuff from Sabine now, not to her proper initiative and decision, but to my authority over her. He would always be convinced that, given a free hand, he could have won her. And this not from vanity, but because he has never found it difficult to win women. This would be intolerable."

"Yes," she agreed.

"He has brought it on himself. He has dared—" and Antoninus's dark cheek flushed. "And the Kadhi of Bemblah must have a lesson from the *Roumiya* who, of her own free choice, rejects him."

It was almost the first indication of resentment he had shown. "Or—" he added.

She looked up quickly. "Or what?"

The slow red deepened under his bronzed skin, but his voice was steady. "Or—she accepts him . . . His intentions are honorable." He said it with evident effort.

There was a pregnant pause. A bee, heavily laden, hummed past to its distant hive. At last Mother Clémens lifted her eyes to his face.

"Did you bring her here for that?" she asked.

"No, before God! I did not," he answered hotly. "But some events are beyond our foreshadowing. We cannot control 'what is written.' Women of her country follow their own lead. They are hazardous in love, as their men are gamblers in business and play, and even life. And, as I said, *ma Mère*, even my love for her cannot save her from herself. It must be her love for me."

The nun sighed for all answer.

"My absence, I trust, is not for long. And be sure that I shall remain within easy call. Wire me freely—you have the cipher. And remember," he took off his hat and crushed her hand in an unconscious grip, "I intrust her to you."

Her steady eyes looked their loyalty and again

he wrung her hand in mute acknowledgment. Then he turned to go. Yet lingered a moment, his hand on the gate.

"You will see her often, *ma Mère*, I am sure. And—couldn't you send her Nadja? I do not like to think she might be lonely."

"Yes, I shall send her Nadja. That will be better in every way. The child herself will be overjoyed. . . . And, in acting as you do, I want to say that—I think you are quite right. With you, I now believe it is the only way. You are right. . . . And," as the gate closed after him, "very brave," she added; to herself. For the valiant have no need of commendation.

CHAPTER XI

NADJA

IT was following upon this interview with Mother Clémens that the next morning's mail brought to Antoninus news of interests in Constantine (he would not put the sea between himself and Bemblah) which necessitated his speedy presence there. He should be gone a fortnight, he told Sabine, perhaps a month, possibly longer; one can never tell. Twice before he had run over to Marseilles, his wife, each time, rather indolently choosing to remain at home; and now she expressed no desire to do otherwise. His preparations were soon made, although, as usual, they were as methodical and complete as if he meant never to return. A few days before he left, Nadja came.

Sabine drove out to the convent for her little friend, who came flying down the flagged walk to meet her.

"I was so afraid something might prevent,"

she said breathlessly, holding up her cheek for Sabine's kiss.

Sabine drew her arm through hers. "What should prevent?"

"Well, it was so sudden. Godmother only told me yesterday."

"Yes," said Mother Clémens, arriving less impetuously, "your visit hardly demanded a fortnight's preparation."

"It would have been a fortnight of pleasant anticipation at least," returned her god-child. "See what you deprived me of."

Mother Clémens pinched her cheek softly. "Come, be off," she said. "Don't keep Sabine waiting,—nor me. I want to say my prayers in peace, at last. There's no cloistral recollection possible with you buzzing about."

"If that's the case, Nadja, say good-bye *in æternum*," advised Sabine. "We shall keep you with us, where you are appreciated. You may come to see her between your devotions, *ma Mère*."

Nadja's arms went around Mother Clémens in an impulsive hug. She was the only mother the girl had ever known.

"Oh! I shall come often, never fear," said Mother Clémens, affectionately returning the

young girl's caress. "I've no intention of having you completely spoiled by foreign indiscipline, as you're sure to be with Sabine."

"Just wait," laughed Sabine over her shoulder, as she stepped into the victoria. "I've an amazing collection of escapades up my sleeve for her. I'll marry her to a Turk or an American, I haven't decided which yet."

"Why not both?" bantered Mother Clémens.

"Perhaps," Sabine waved back gaily, as they drove off.

So came Nadja Albani, with the unspoilt bloom of her sixteen convent years, her great dark eyes like her beautiful Arab mother's, and her rippling fair hair, a remote Tuscan heritage, through her father, the late General Albani.

At the death of her mother, who was a daughter of the rich Ben Osman family, General Albani had sent his infant daughter to his sisters to be cared for. But even the genial climate of Italy was too severe for the exotic little stranger. She was brought back to Mehdiá where her father's command was; and here Mother Clémens, her god-mother and eventually her guardian, took the little girl. General Albani, who had deeply loved his wife and never remarried, did not long survive

her. His large fortune went to his little daughter, whom he bequeathed to the affection and care of her mother's old friend and his. And from Mother Clémens, Nadja had known motherly care and love a plenty in her brief sixteen years.

She was a lithe-limbed, low-laughed, sometimes slumbrous creature, wholly lovable and with a nature an untried mine, as yet, of purest gold. She bubbled through Sabine's quiet house, and stirred the lazy echoes in the high-ceiled chambers as only blithesome youth can do. Antoninus and she were fast friends. Indeed, he had known her father, as he had known most of the personalities in Tunisia.

"What shall I bring you back from Tunis, Nadja?" he asked her as they were at their noon-day breakfast the day of his departure. "I don't have to ask Sabine. I know what she wants."

"What do I want?" Sabine inquired, dubiously.

"A little black slave-girl from the Soudan. I know where I can buy one," he teased.

"I want nothing of the kind," was Sabine's emphatic rejoinder. "What ever should I do with a baby slave-girl? I prefer a tiny gazelle from the Zaghouan, if my present is to be something alive."

"But it isn't to be alive," assured Antoninus. "I intend looking for it in the *berka*, the former

slave-market you remember, where they sell jewels, at the *souk* in Tunis?"

"Ah! that will be nice." Sabine's eyes shone with pleasure. "I see, now, where you found your idea of the slave-girl. You mean the black heart-shaped pearl you told Ben Hafiz, the merchant, to find for you. Why don't you give warning when you spring conundrums? And now, you, Nadja? What do you want from the *berka*?"

"I should love a *sebh'a* of aloes-wood, Antoninus," the girl said. "Godmother has never liked me to have one."

"Little infidel," said Antoninus. "What do you want with a *sebh'a*?"

"Of *aloes-wood*," she supplemented, emphasizing.

"Oh! I see," he laughed, enlightened. "To bring you your heart's desire, is it? I thought you were too good a *Roumiya* to accept such Moslem superstitions."

"I believe what is best in both religions," she replied waywardly—"in Sidna Aissa and *all* the Prophets. Yes," as Antoninus threw out his hands in mock incredulity. "If one faith is good, aren't two faiths better? I have a right to both, you know."



"You little paynim!" exclaimed Antoninus. "What do you think of that for logic, Sabine? Nadja, I'm thoroughly shocked. You'll be asking me to buy you a *sifsari* next."

"No fear," laughed the girl. "A face-veil isn't one of the things I consider best in *din el-islâm*. Unless——"

"Unless what?" interrogated Sabine, curiously.

"Unless it so happens that I marry a *meslem*," she returned, the color mounting slightly to her clear cheeks.

"Nadja, I seriously consider it my duty to inform Mother Clémens at once of your outrageous unorthodoxy," declared Antoninus, much amused at the calm daring of her words, while Sabine examined her with a new interest.

"Oh! godmother would not be too, *too* much surprised," Nadja said, confidently. "And she would be the first one to understand, I know."

"I believe you," confirmed Antoninus.

His horse was at the door. Sabine and Nadja were to accompany him in the victoria as far as Susa, where he would take the train up to Tunis.

Book Three
Within the Spell of Islâm

CHAPTER I

INITIATION

WITH Antoninus gone, the house seemed dismally empty to Sabine in spite of Nadja's distracting presence. The long serene days, so engagingly devoid of happenings, became to her full of a tumultuous and restless vitality without him. She felt the imminence of the solution to be faced, the sure pressing forward of a crisis behind the present moment's routine and commonplace.

Not for a moment had she been the dupe of Antoninus's business summons or failed to recognize the actual, under the apparent, situation. She knew he had withdrawn to give her, as it were, fighting room, after rallying to her, in Nadja and Mother Clémens, the best and wisest influences she could have. And she clearly recognized, too, the nature of the struggle in which she had engaged. She knew that in it her happiness and that of An-

toninus were staked. She had never consciously shirked an issue nor side-stepped a known responsibility, and the thought did not occur to her of doing so now. The American woman's instinct and training to meet and manage her love affairs single handed, confident in her power to dominate any situation, led her insensibly to minimize both the quixotism of Antoninus's present action and the dominating personality of Ben Zegri. However, she knew she should have to face and conquer this feeling for the Kadhi—love, obsession, whatever it might be—before she could again meet Antoninus on the old footing.

There was the alternative. She could accept Ben Zegri's love. Nothing could have more radically shown the immense change she had undergone since quitting America than the fact that this alternative could present itself to her mind as a possible eventuality. Such a marriage, following a divorce from Antoninus, would create comment, undoubtedly; but it would cause no convulsion in the Levantine world of the place. How far had she drifted from the ideals of that Occident of whose teachings she had always so proudly considered herself the standard-bearer. How far indeed! A few faint ripples from that

distant sea might reach her here. But the vast shores of Islâm would gather her in; Islâm with its emancipation from detail, its concentration of life and purpose, its simplicity and unity of aim. Mohammedanism held much that attracted her. Its tenets really demanded no great wrench from her fundamental Unitarian beliefs, although there might be some hesitation about the practice. She asked herself was she prepared for this? And she concluded that she was not.

She leaned back in the victoria and gratefully hailed the waking sea-breeze while Nadja kept up a rill of talk as they bowled smoothly over the white sand. The life and color of Bemblah were rousing to the freshening evening and the beach was crowded with light-hearted promenaders intent on indemnifying themselves for the forced seclusion and inactivity of the long, hot day. The sea stretched motionless, a far mirror of molten silver, framing itself in fretwork where it curled to rim the glistening sands. They drove on, past straggling, square white villas each yielding, now, its quota to the gayly dressed throng, past the Kasbah where white-helmeted officers moved about in the spicy foliage of slanting terraces, on into the stretch of sandy drive that terminated around the curve

of the sea in the distant Kuriat baths, decayed yet stately vestiges of the Roman times.

Out here the crowd thinned. Mabrouk came toward them with some Arab friends. He saluted and would have passed, but Sabine signed to him and the victoria stopped. She wanted him to know her little Nadja better, and the young man had been shy about his visits to the house since she had come. At her gesture he left his friends and joined her. He was good to look at in his white silk *djebba* which showed at the throat a long point of the sky-blue embroidered vest beneath; and the pink rose above his ear touched the fine note of local dandyism. While they talked, a few heavy carriages crossed theirs at intervals, the dark eyes of the occupants showing in the flashing slit of their white silk *sifsara*.

"Here comes your carriage, Mabrouk," said Sabine, recognizing the pair of well-groomed white mules in their handsome scarlet trappings. "Perhaps it is Madame your mother."

As the carriage came on, he casually half turned and nodded to the Arab on the box, then gave a swift, keen look at its two veiled occupants. But as they came abreast, the nearest silken figure dropped her *sifsari* the fraction of a second, and

the grave, still lovely face of the young man's mother smiled a gentle greeting, while at the same time a small, henna-fingered hand was thrust out of the silk cocoon beside her and gayly waved in recognition.

Sabine and Nadja bowed cordially, Nadja with a pretty gesture. Mabrouk made no sign, beyond a smile to his mother.

"It is my cousin, of course," he explained.

Nadja looked up quickly. By the Islâmic law, in families of his caste the girls are never given in marriage to strangers so long as there are eligible cousins to husband them, this duty going by seniority.

"I have an older brother," he hastened to explain, answering her look. Whereat the girl flushed up and they both laughed in some confusion. Sabine, too, smiled; and saying adieu, signaled to drive on.

Later, the kind old Khaïd passed her, with a courteous gesture; and from a distance she saw Ben Zegri, followed by the *effendis* of his suite. So she was surprised when they reached home, shortly after, to find him awaiting her in the deepening shadows of the patio.

He advanced as she entered.

like the Koran." He took the book from her and turned the leaves at hazard, beginning to read the melodious, guttural alliteration in a voice that was sonorously gentle. In a moment he stopped and looked at her. "Do you understand?"

"It is the description of Allah's throne," she ventured, hesitating.

"Yes—cut out of a single pearl and high by twelve thousand years!"

"Ah!" was all Sabine said. It seemed rather childish to her.

He closed the book, retaining it as he leaned forward slightly, and spoke with sudden earnestness.

"There is a world within these brazen clasps. Will you enter, guided by me?"

There was that in his tone which caused her to meet his eyes, and she flushed slightly at his eagerness.

"Surely; I could have no better master," she returned. The word seemed to strike him unpleasantly.

"Master! No, not that. Guide," he corrected. "You could have no surer guide."

For the moment she did not reply. And before either of them again spoke, Ali came through the

Dining-room followed by Mabrouk; and almost immediately some of the garrison people came, Cecilly de Vrez and her husband, and the French Consul. In the general movement, Ben Zegri took his leave.

"May I not hope to find you soon again—tomorrow—and *alone?*" he managed to murmur. And, hard pressed, Sabine dropped her eyes in assent. Before the others realized it, he was gone.

CHAPTER II

SHADOWS OF HASHISH

IN the street outside, Ben Zegri, wrapped closely in his *bermous*, passed quickly and, he hoped, unheeded by the few returning early from the beach. But from a shrill-voiced group of excited urchins playing at marbles in the dust, a small brown form detached itself at sight of him, and, unnoticed, sped down the street, lost at once in its many windings. Ben Zegri came quickly the other way out by the Bab Essour and stepped at once into his waiting carriage which was drawn up in a receding angle of the city wall.

"*Emchi!*" (Off) he said to the Arab on the box. The man lashed his drowsy mules and, circling the town outside the walls, turned at the Bab el Gharbi, into the highway to Susa. In a moment they settled down to the steady swing of the five-mile drive before them and Ben Zegri lay back in deep thought; while away ahead of them in the

dusk a pair of brown heels raced through the white dust of the road.

All that had seemed unaccountable to Ben Zegri in Antoninus's conduct was explained away. The question was not between them, as he had at first supposed. Her husband's presence even was not required to safeguard the American lady; for the only issue, the moral one, remained with her. It was new to Ben Zegri. It was new to most people in a country where personal possession of the woman is first secured, then maintained at every cost. And quite remote from his conception of the hitherto possible in his own case, to the Kadhi of Bemblah, was this heed to *her* desire, this absolute dependence upon a woman's consent. This, too, in a point how vital! one that touched—yes, he confessed it—to the very core of his own life.

For now Ben Zegri, the Moslem, was beginning to learn what love could mean. Perhaps in this awakened perception Antoninus was as great a factor as Sabine herself. The other's evaluation of the woman between them set Ben Zegri's own measurement of her. Had he for a moment underestimated the quality, the strength and temper of the tried Toledo blade of Antoninus's character, it



might have been different. But the Moslem instinctively felt the underlying Saracen in the other. They were brothers in soul, this *Roumi* and himself, sprung only from two different mothers, the Cross and the Crescent. So could he better realize the beauty of the Christian ideal. His quick imagination roused to the vision it unfolded. Not now for him the wearied plethora of satiety in the many. He smiled contemptuously, pityingly, for the fate that might have been his. Henceforth, no fluttering, beating wings against detaining bars, but, instead, the dauntless jerfalcon, from her untrammelled flight, should circle to his wrist. Not even his silver whistle should need to call her to that sure abiding place. The thought thrilled him. Life was good to Ben Zegri as it had never been. Fortune, love, ambition, all seemed his. There was his son. And other sons should follow, to fill high places in the land and strengthen his house and name. But he should not ask *her* to bear him children. His mind refused to couple her with the ruthless sex tribute. Pain, the universal law, was not for her. She should live enshrined, apart, in a villa that he would build for her on the sea slopes, amid a bower of green and spice.

Thus he hugged his new-birthed dream as he wheeled through the now fallen night into the little village of Es Skahnes, where nesting villas winked their scattered lights through the dark foliage and the black palms stood out motionless against the lighter wash of the sea.

He went to the mosque and made his ablutions and prayer—then turned in the direction of his home, in no mood for talk.

Silently he passed the porter's lodge, absently acknowledging the old man's greeting, and entered the quiet house, unheeding, if indeed conscious of, the hidden form within a darkened doorway as he passed; of watchful eyes that followed him as he crossed the patio until the hangings of his own door fell together behind him.

Here the air was warm and cloyed with perfumes. The colored night-light wavered its spell of uncertainty over the rich stuffs and oriental furnishings, winked sharply in the lurid glint of copper and priceless lacquer, or dully lingered in the velvet depths of costly carpet and *mussalla*. A thin blue spiral from the incense bowl curled its subtle breath low in the lush air.

In deep abstraction, Ben Zegri exchanged his white linen *djebba* for a longer one of yellow silk,

laid aside his heavy turban and folded about his shaven head a loose, voluminous *dulband* of orange colored gauze. This fell in short, straight folds about his ears like the Egyptian headdress, blending with the metallic tones of his short red beard in a gradation of color that heightened the pallor of his face. He slipped out of his scarlet slippers and into sandals of a dull mandarin hue, mechanically fingering, the while, his amber rosary that moved like drops of flame between his white fingers; and sank, at last, cross-legged onto the deep pile of carpets that seemed to enfold him in their sumptuous caress.

He reached, presently, for a nearby *dar'bouka* and struck it twice; and he did not lift his eyes to the woman who, at once, entered in answer to his summons.

"*Goze'i* [my hashish pipe]" he said briefly, quite kindly and impersonally.

If the unusual request surprised her she did not show it. Without reply, she moved noiselessly amid the hushed shadows of the room, deftly prepared the hashish, filled the small *gozeh*, and presented it to him. He took it from her henna-tipped fingers with an absent, not unkind stare. She was his second wife and little more than a child

in years, slender, drooping, with a certain sinuous beauty and unusual, fair skin. She held the stick of charcoal timidly while he drew his light, and he mechanically touched her braceleted arm to his lips before he lay back and, with narrowing lids, sucked the savor of his smoke in long breaths.

She lighted two of the great colored candles that stood on the floor, six in all, in massive brass sticks three feet high. Which done, she stood hesitating and with downcast eyes, holding her *gimbri* which she had brought with her, not knowing what would be demanded of her. Ben Zegri continued to smoke, and made no sign. He had forgotten her. Happening at last to raise his eyes, he saw her and, in a low word, and without excuse of any kind, he dismissed her.

Gradually his eyes began to intensify and glow under their half-closed lids, and his head sank slightly forward. The pale, chiseled features dulled to an almost unearthly alabastrine whiteness in the orange halo of the silken *dulband*. The slow magic of the hashish had begun to gather up the glowing threads of his thought and to spin them, with flying shuttle, into a shining tissue of the future. The cup of to-morrow held precious drops,

the wine of a distilled joy, within the rim of its promise. Already the potent genii of the drug held out the golden goblet. Even now, the eager lips of his longing drained it to the lees.

CHAPTER III

ON THE HOUSETOP

AND whilst Ben Zegri dreamed within, a woman lay alone upon the housetop in the chill of the night dews, her hot forehead crushed to the cold stone, her naked arms unheeding of the bruise of its hard contact. Zorah, with straining heart, kept lonely, tumultuous vigil.

It was not her night to attend upon Ben Zegri. Yet, minutely as she had noted his late home-coming, his summons and quick dismissal of the other, it had been without a jealous tremor, with indifference almost. With her—the second wife—she had soon measured strength and known her for the pliant, timid child she was, from whose rivalry she had nothing to fear—as yet. There might come a day, but it was far off. She herself, with the birth of her boy had touched indeed to the apex of her highest desires. And then, with her happiness in the removal of that haunting dread

of no sons, had come her growing love for Ben Zegri.

Allah, in truth, was with her. He, the Compassionate, the All-merciful, had vouchsafed to her this boon above price for the Meslema. And might he not give more? *Allah iarh'emil* have pity! Give her what now she craved; his love for her alone, the sole love of her husband. It was much. But with the passionate force of her untempered nature she gave herself to the thought. Such love as hers must draw him to her, the mother of his son. And, as if compelled, indeed, by the intensity of her desire, his bearing toward her had seemed different. Not that it had changed but that it had modified. There was an added note of consideration that she eagerly caught, not realizing that while it meant increased indifference for her, it was born of a new respect for all women. But even as her heart leaped to meet it, she knew that it brought no closer bond between them. Rather was it another barrier holding her inexorably where she belonged, an appanage of his life and not an integral part of it. It was a cruel blow to her new-born dreams. Blindly she beat and broke her wings against the closed door. It was unavailing. And it aroused in her a frenzy of un-

submission which was not Moslem. Her Oriental apathy was gone. And as she lay there in the night, a tumult of revolt, of incoherent plans and impotent reprisal surged through her tortured soul.

Low clouds had drawn over the starlight. A complaining wind came from the sea and moaned through the black gardens and the palms tossed aloft their restless streamers. She shivered and gathered her white *djar* closer. She stretched out her arm and picked up some pebbles from about a potted jasmine near and leaning far over dropped two, in slow succession, into the small kitchen court beneath.

In answer, a woman came softly up the steep stair. She wore the dark woolen *fouta* of a *kata* or house servant, and stepped cautiously as she came across the roof. She had taken off her sandals and wound a strip of linen about her clicking anklets. She crouched upon her haunches beside her mistress and waited in silence. After a time, Zorah spoke, following out her thought.

"The boy said only what you told me; no further?"

"No further, *ya Lalla*. So spoke Hassan: The Master came forth from the *Roumi's* house to his carriage that waited by the Bab Essour; thence home: *Barka* [that is all]."



Zorah nodded, her eyes ablaze. It was not the first time Ben Zegri's visits to the house of Antoninus had been reported to her by the boy she had set to spy upon him.

"What does Hassan now?" she asked.

"He sleeps," returned his mother. "Great also is his need; he ran far and with speed."

"It is well," acquiesced her mistress, "let him sleep. To-morrow shall he need to run farther, for I have need to learn many things. Hassan shall be well rewarded."

"*La, la, Mart-Arfi,*" returned the woman promptly, "speak not of that. Is not thy servant's pleasure but to do thy bidding? Willing feet has Hassan in thy service."

She took one of her lady's feet in her hands and began to chafe it gently with a long, even movement.

"*Aië, aië*, like to a stone is it." She took the other foot. "Both are cold. Thou shalt be *broudda* in the morning," she went on, solicitously. "Do thou come within now. See," she coaxed, "the night is far spent; soon is the dawn. It is not well to stay upon the housetop when the morning vapors rise from the sea."

It was true. Zorah shivered anew.

"Good Mna," she said wearily, laying her arm about the other's shoulder and allowing her to help her to her feet. "Tired am I, it is true, and most weary; but it is weariness of the heart, my Mna."

"*Naref, naref* [I know]," said Mna soothingly. "Thou hast need to laugh, to dance, my flower of pomegranate; to again take up thy *minjar* and snap the *sajat* [castanets] as was thy wont. No dance pleases the Master as thine. My evening star, my sprig of wild thyme and sassafras. Why shouldst thou droop and fret like the moping ring-dove! Hast thou not thy son?"

Thus cajoling and encouraging by turns, the faithful woman helped her mistress down the steep stair, carefully secured the door at the foot, and followed Zorah into her bed-chamber where the three children were asleep; the little girls in one of the two huge alcove-beds, the baby curled in a snowy lamb's fleece in his cradle, which was a large turtle's shell suspended from the ceiling by three cords, like a hanging basket.

Seeing that the little ones slept, Mna passed to the kitchen whence she returned bearing a hot spiced drink. This she gently forced upon Zorah with much comforting insistence. "Do thou rest,"

she whispered, helping her undress. "The Master is alone. *She* is not with him. He asked only for his *gozeh*."

But at the word, Zorah started up. "His *gozeh*, sayest thou? Then shall he sleep far into the day. Quick, quick. Fetch me a *qmijja* and a *fouta* of thine own." Already she was feverishly stripping off her own fine *qmijja* (chemise), her heavy anklets and ornaments, had undone from about her hair the gold-embroidered band that fastened her white *âjar*, and she now stood impatient, imperious, waiting while Mna looked her amazement. But the latter saw that her mistress's mood brooked no questioning. She hastily fetched what Zorah asked for, a serving woman's dress, and Zorah put it on, adding a pair of well-worn heelless walking slippers and a voluminous *haïk*, the indispensable outdoor garment for all classes. Similarly equipped, Mna stood ready in a moment, awaiting further orders with some curiosity. This, indeed, was an unusual proceeding.

"Prepare thy bundle of linen to go to the bath," Zorah commanded. "And we shall need Hassan; wake him. Also see to it that the Master may be kept in ignorance of our absence, should he chance to wake."

She waited for Mna to rejoin her and together they softly passed through the sleeping house and out into the night.

To avoid the porter's lodge they turned into the garden, threading their way under low fruit trees and amid the tangle of flowering shrubs and rambling melon vines. A watchful wolf hound crept stealthily forward, his fangs bared, and was reassured by a low word and familiar caress. Reaching the extremity of the garden, they turned behind the low cistern-wall, and pulling aside a stunted cypress that hid an opening in the outer wall, with some difficulty, they squeezed through.

They emerged upon the high road on the farther side of Es Skahnes toward Susa. Turning, they retraced their direction, following along the villa wall, and soon found themselves before the small mosque and few yards of *souk* that marked the center of the little village.



CHAPTER IV

THE FREEDOM OF THE ROAD

HERE, in the market-place, a bare-legged, brown-smocked carter was watering his mule at the rude stone trough before setting out to Bemblah for his day's work. A boy lolled nearby watching him, sleepy-eyed, and showing his gleaming white teeth in a series of far-reaching yawns.

By this time, a ragged moon had found itself in the fitful sky and was trying to hold its pale own against the gray up-creep of day. The feeble light from the grimy lantern before the mosque guttered and swayed with each buffet of the keen morning wind.

The boy gave forth a prolonged and voluble yawn.

"Hi, thou Hassan," said the man good naturedly. "Have a care for those waggish jaws of thine. What hour is this to bring thee from thy bed? A

troubled conscience following some new rascality, I wager."

Hassan grinned lazily. "*La, la*, Salah; it was a flea, which is of commoner occurrence with me than a bad conscience. That I leave to my betters."

"Thou imp of Shaitan," returned Salah, admiringly. "Something, indeed, would I give to wag that nimble tongue of thine in my own head. Just the same," he went on, "thou hast compassed some piece of deviltry and hast never slept at all this night. This do I now believe."

"*Ya Malhut*,"¹ Hassan yawned. "It rests me but to hear thee prate, and for that alone thy company were good. Loth am I to see thee go."

"Well, for that there is remedy," answered Salah. He had thrown the circular mat of palm fiber upon the flat, open plank bottom of his cart, and, gathering up the single hempen rope that served to guide the mule, he wheeled the beast about and now prepared to start. "Come with me. Room there is upon the cart for thee to sleep. The lord Kadhi will not miss thee for his writing in the morning, I'll wager," he added, jocularly.

¹ *Malhut*, the fish that holds up the world; hence, one who gives himself unnecessary trouble.

the feet was hemmed and the skin above it without crease or wrinkle. All this he noted; then spoke, carefully addressing himself to Hassan.

"It is far enough to Bemblah, and we shall meet no one at this hour. Also, it is foolish to walk if one may ride. What sayest thou, Hassan? There is place on the mat for all."

But the boy shrugged his shoulders rudely.

"A pest on all women-folk," he exclaimed. But it was politely enough that he turned to the woman with the bundle. "Get up, O my mother," he said, taking it from her and helping her onto the cart. Then he silently gave his shoulder to the other who, placing her hand on it and using one of her companion's hanging feet as a step, sprang lightly to a place beside her. Salah, watching, thoughtfully drew his own conclusions. The cart started again, Hassan joining him in the road, and together they fell into their stride beside the big wheel which screened them somewhat from the occupants of the vehicle.

"Whence come they, thinkest thou?" the carter asked, confidentially.

"Since when do I occupy myself with the women in the street!" broke out Hassan, superbly.

"More profitable subjects for wonderment have I, *bi roabbi*, than two country women going to the Hammam."

The man laughed. "By the beard of the Prophet, hear the youngster. One would think him already a man. But see; thou art too lately come thyself from the women's quarters to interest thyself as yet with what comes from there. So much the better for thy peace of mind," he concluded.

Like most of his ruminative compatriots, the carter was something of a philosopher. Also, he was decidedly of a social turn of mind, as evinced in the several indications he threw out of entire readiness to engage in conversation with his silent passengers. And no doubt his desire would have blossomed into deed, had not the alert Hassan, apparently with utter unconsciousness, each time adroitly headed him off. In point of fact, the boy had need of all his wit and unusual store of small talk to repress the persistent carter's would-be loquacity, inwardly cursing his gallant proclivities the while; until at last, the white walls of Bemblah rose before them out of the gray levels.

Soon they were before the Bab el Gharbi, one of the only two gates that, since the French occu-

pation, are left open all night; and here the two women got down.

Again did the eyes of the too-susceptible Salah linger upon the shapely ankles that showed tantalizingly below the *haïk's* edge. In the 'land of veiled women' the foot is revelative, and your Oriental reads more surely in it than does the Occidental in a pretty face; for a bare foot cannot be fashioned to deccit. Salah's was a close guess as to the age and quality of the woman who stood on this arched pair. But it was not the voice of their owner who spoke him the soft, guttural thanks for both, as, quickly parting from their late company, they unobtrusively entered under the great gate.

Salah drew a deep sigh; whereat Hassan burst into an irreverent peal of laughter, then narrowly dodged the cuffing that the man, crimsoning, promptly reached out to give him.

"Mockest thou, whelp of thy mother's breeding!" he exclaimed—approximately, for the foulness of the Eastern street epithets may not mar these pages. "I will teach thee manners!" But the boy came back unabashed and grinning.

"*Fissa'a fil souk* [hurry up for the market place],

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thou carter of houris; I am hungry," he said; and Salah, his momentary wrath dissipated in its explosion, jumped nimbly onto the cart and together they jogged gayly into the town.

CHAPTER V

A SPARK TO SMOKING FLAX

THE *fegr*, the sunrise call to prayer, floated out from the great mosque as the cart rolled in.

On his dais of masonry under the deep archway, the hoary gatekeeper spread his *mussalla* for his morning devotions. The streets were filling with the just-aroused population who, from carefully closed doors, emerged fully dressed as they had slept, except for the *djebba*, which they pulled on as they came into the street, all eager to break their fast with the inevitable cigarette. Hassan and Salah were soon with the crowd heading for the *souk*, keeping up a running fire of greeting with the acquaintances they met on every side.

Already the two women were nowhere to be seen. Like phantoms they had glided through the street, turning off at the first chance into a veritable labyrinth of crooked alleys that made a wide detour by way of the Kasbah to the Hammam el Lif, the

occupants. They were evidently returning from a ball at the Kasbah.

Zorah, drawn up motionless and rigid in her white winding-sheet, at once recognized the American lady, in silken cape and hood, leaning back restfully and smiling at the spirited badinage going on about her. But the other beside her—who was she? The Arab woman instantly recognized the Eurasian in Nadja's bewildering beauty, noted in a glance the racial quality of her mellow coloring, her high, straight features and supple bearing that blent so happily with the vivacity and cultured charm of the high-class *Roumiya*. Loosely hooded in a sheen of blue, Nadja's golden head seemed to lift itself out of the ethereal surge of her tulle gown as the morning star lifts above the shimmer of cloud-foam in a cerule sky. In an overflow of joyous youth, she waved her hand prettily to the two silent figures blotted against the wall.

"*Salām aleïkoul!*" she said, merrily, in passing. There was no mistaking the purity of the accent.

The victoria passed ahead and the officers, nursing their swords and holding their white gloves, went on somewhat boisterously down the street in front of the two women; but Zorah could under-

stand nothing of their gay talk. Soon they turned off, and, lounging before the door of the Hammam, Zorah found Hassan waiting for her.

"Hast seen the *Roumiyas* pass?" she asked the boy fiercely, catching his arm so tightly that he winced.

"*Nâm*, [yes] *ya Lalla*," he hurried to answer, under pressure.

"Go, then; find out who is she, the fair one with the *Lalla Americana* in the house I set thee to watch. Return here quickly."

"*Nâm*, *ya Lalla*," again said Hassan promptly, and was off like a flash.

There were few bathers at this early hour; several elderly women unfettered by domestic exactions at home and eager to have finished before the later rush, and a noisy group of *oulemas* or professional mourners who, having wept the night through, were bent upon indemnifying themselves now by noisy and cheerful recountings of the funeral details. Mna ministered to her lady's needs, managing her own bath meanwhile, and they did not keep Hassan waiting.

"Well?" questioned Zorah impatiently of the boy.

"The fair one is called Nadja. She is the sole

child of Sidi Albani, the Nazarene General who is now dead. He left her great riches. Her mother was a *meslema*. She lives now with the *Roumis* in the big house. She is kind to all the poor and she loves the *meslemin*. She is like one of us. This is all I have learned."

Hassan repeated his information in one breath like a lesson, while Zorah devoured it eagerly; then he stood waiting. Her face had gone a dull, angry red; but before the boy's inquisitive eyes she controlled herself.

"It is well," she said with evident effort, and the blaze of her eyes suddenly awed him. "Take these," and she poured many copper *sourdis* into his hands. "To-day I have no further need for thee and thou art free. But see thou be returned before the fifth hour," she cautioned. Hassan answered respectfully and disappeared like the wind.

She summoned Mna; they must return. She could not risk a longer absence from the villa. Also, she must think. She had need to piece together the different bits of information she now possessed before she could be sure of facts.

As she walked home in the heavy heat of the late morning, for it was long past the second hour

of prayer, the heart within her strained almost to bursting. In a fierce upsurging of ungovernable rage, she felt she could crush the girl, this fair-haired *Roumiya* who was also a *melema*; that she could rend her piece by piece. With the blind and lightning conclusion of maddened jealousy she never for an instant doubted that in Nadja lay the reason for Ben Zegri's frequentation of the American lady's house. She was too well aware of his admiration for the hated *Roumiyas*; for their learning,—they could read books and also write; for their courage,—they were not in fear of pestilence, of those evil spirits the house *djinn*, above all of their husbands. Had she, herself, not seen the American lady look Ben Zegri coolly in the eyes? Also, she well knew the fascination of wealth to the ambitious Kadhi. And this girl, unlike the daughters of Islâm, inherited all of her Christian father's fortune. And her beauty—with the sharpness of the pang at remembrance of that glowing loveliness, her heart became as a stone within her breast, her knees as cotton. She reached out a grasping hand for Mna's strong arm.

Thus back and forth through the torturing phases of jealous hate, the sickening pangs of defeat, did she alternate during the long walk home.

But when at length they reached the villa, her fury had spent itself. Instead, she was weak and unutterably miserable, well-nigh prostrate by her devouring sense of impotence and wrong. Worse, she told herself, a thousand times worse than anything she had dreamed or feared was the situation thus unfolded to her of the possibility of a Moslem wife—and such she must be to espouse the Kadhi—who was also a *Roumiya*. She quivered with the humiliating knowledge of her own inferiority, of the galling disadvantage which must inevitably leave her shattered in the dust. With these hated strangers she felt there remained to her but one weapon, destruction.

Only when the faithful Mna had, at last, seen her mistress safe in bed did she leave her, taking with her the telltale garments of their night's adventure. But Zorah lay among her cushions, the dark beauty of her wonderful face marred by contorting passion, her soft palms unconscious of the bite of the clenched nails. And after a time an unhealthy light settled into her somber eyes, a light that it was not good to see there.

She, too, even as Ben Zegri, dreamed of the morrow.

CHAPTER VI

A DREAM AND AN AWAKING

BUT on that morrow something was to happen, something that had to be; not in the order of *Maktoub*—because 'it is so written'—or even of simple chance, which is the most illogical and arbitrary of all inert influences; but as the logical outcome of other happenings premised long ago and bound, in their allotted time, to work out to their natural and inevitable conclusions.

The choke and stife of the blistering afternoon, with its heavy touch of sirocco, were deliciously remote in the cool patio where the tiny fountain perled and broad jewel-carpets of *olea strepens*, flung down by the stained windows high above.

Sabine lay back in her basket chair, her open book—it was the *Hadith*—laid down on her knees, and Ben Zagi, from his seat close by, lazily watched the insect moving life in her wide gaze that rested, unheeding, on Nafisa and Ma-

brouk. These two were wholly engrossed in themselves. And their soft Arabic talk, spaced by low laughter and many silences, the thin voice of the falling water in its shallow basin, struck mellow sound in the cloistral quiet. The sleeping sloughi hound stretched his lean length on the cool marble beside them.

Ben Zegri had been explaining the Hadith. But like Abélard of old, he opened for her a book of larger knowledge than the one before them. After these long weeks of stern self-repression, in an unguarded moment, he had raised the flood-gates of his soul; and the torrent of his passion and longing, refusing longer to be stemmed, at last leaped forth, bearing him on and out upon the broad sea of his irresistible desire.

In quick, low tones, yet restrained to even modulation, he spoke, his burning eyes focused on her changing features, while he warily noted each shade of feeling; held as it were, the pulse of her face under his trained fingers. At last, by some strange, wild favor of destiny, the undreamed-of chance had come to him; and ruthlessly was he prepared to use it.

Never in all the years of his gratified, imperious life had he wanted anything as he did now the

Roumi woman before him. He wanted her by the intoxicating sole right of his personal conquest. He was aware of the magnetic power he had over her, but he did not want to resort to this merely physical, and therefore blind, force to win her. His frank animalism, which careful years of mastery had tempered into the intellectual refinement of the trained voluptuary, rebelled at this coarser method. But win her he must. A miracle alone could save her from him now. Already the mad race of his beating pulses exulted within him. Unchecked by face-veil or *sifsari*, he drank up the beauty of her face, pale and startled at first, then suffused and tremulous with emotion. And now, under his continued gaze, all the leaping color had ebbed from it. In its place was the white, rigid peace of slightly hypnotic control. And, with infinite mastery, Ben Zegri felt his way.

He possessed her imagination, her senses, even her intellect. As on some far-off height with him she seemed to tread the untrod ways of a love denied to the many, dematerialized and transcendent, where annihilation of self in a rhapsody of exaltation should find its ultimate equation in a divinely sublimated fusion with the beloved.

The lore of the Hadith and the *Shahnāma* un-

rolled before her in Ben Zegri's onrushing words. Traced in his Oriental imagery the Súfi teachings which make divinity sensual matter as well as spirit, held her thrall'd. Into what companionship with the higher Intelligences, with Azraël, with Ariel and Sandalphon—those tenants of the super-realms; up through what glory of the seven Castles, which figure the seven Heavens of the Prophet's revelation, did he lead her, himself, perforce, to be the Bahram Gúr of his wondrous unfolding.

Through softest rose mists of allurement his voice reached out its caress to her. Not, surely, since to our credulous first mother, has the serpent's tongue been coated more honey-sweet in the sibilant promise, 'ye shall be as gods.' In the star-hung vision he conjured up she could not penetrate to the cruel, crumbling footing of the whole artful structure, to the inexorable suttee-sacrifice of the woman in the apotheosis of the man which is the inevitable threnody of all Eastern dogma.

Narrowly Ben Zegri watched her, and watching, his eyes shrank to needle points of flashing emerald. Slowly his hand closed over hers. With his contact an electric thrill pricked her with its icy sting from head to heel. It was like the sharp, sweet

whiff of ether. Softly her senses crashed about her. Nadja, Mabrouk, the world were æons off. Compelled, she lifted her heavy eyes to his, and her spirit swooned within her. . . .

And here the Chain of Things, which had never ceased its slow drag since a one-time evening across the sea, brought at last its link of events to the notch that overlaps the present. For the pad of babouched feet approaching in the hall was accompanied by a booted tread, and in an instant, between the softly parted hangings, Ali advanced his bronze person, tray and card in hand.

Ben Zegri's fingers fell away.

For one little minute did the servant stand while Sabine stared uncomprehendingly upon the small white rectangle. She drew her cold hand slowly across her eyes. Then a swift, glad cry, up from the very heart of her, rang through the patio's hush. For the card read: *Mr. Timothy Grist Townsend, New York*; and that gentleman's five feet eleven and a quarter of thew and sinew filled the archway.

"You? Timmy!"

A stride, and he had both her outstretched hands in his while she looked at him doubtfully, dazed and incredulous. From the Outer Rim and the Eternal Saki back to Gotham is a far cry.

He was scanning her face narrowly, searching for the old light in her eyes, keenly noting the new.

"It is good to see you again," he said simply, and crushed her hands.

"But when did you get here? How did you come?"

"This minute. By boat, rail, and boat again. But chiefly by the grace of God, for never did I feel such heat."

He laughed his old, breezy laugh and it sounded good to her fasting ears. He seemed so big and tanned and—well, different, to her, as they stood looking at each other, smiling, yet appraising; as people look when there is something more of change than the lapse of years may account for.

And during this time the others had been reaching what conclusions they might. Ben Zegri's were swift and convincing. He had risen. She turned to him.

"His Excellency, the Kadhi of Bemblah. Nadja, dear," she drew the girl to her. "This is my little friend, the Signorina Albani; Si M'hamud Mabrouk."

Nadja made her European courtesy and Mabrouk shook hands.

The little ripple the newcomer created drew

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them into general talk and a pleasant quarter of an hour followed during which nothing could surpass Ben Zegri's bearing, while Timmy acquitted himself rather brilliantly, he thought; for French had never been his strong point. Mabrouk was frankly interested in the American, the second specimen he had, so far, encountered.

Presently the Kadhi was taking his leave, with a look as he saluted her profoundly, that Salima refused to meet. And now that, in the privacy of the evening's cool they were all four at table on the terrace for Mabrouk had been kept so busy. The growing sunset had sunk back to his dinner-hour. The stars lighted their evening lamps and the sea-by sea whispered its infinite secrets. While under the soft moon shadows the table gleamed a shining disk symbol of the secret joy and peace that lie in the daily commonplace.

Something that had long been more real within Salima. Something primitive that seemed kinship with what she was the child of the sea and the kindly light. With the memory of the world that came with memories of the sea and was in the time passed in tender moments with of youth and benediction. And there were years in her eyes even as she looked out of these days.

ness. And Townsend, somehow, caught the infection.

"Yes, it is," he was answering her. "It's a wonderful old country, an unexpected old country. Rather heady though, I should say." His eyes narrowed in fleeting reminiscence. He had been having some experiences of his own since landing at Tunis. "You don't want to soak too much of it into your marrow, you know."

Sabine looked up at him, startled. That was just what she had been doing, letting it filtrate to her very fiber. She waited for him to continue, but he was looking across at Nadja.

She rose. "Timmy," she said, and an unspeakable gratitude welled into her eyes that set her old-time playfellow and sometime lover to thinking furiously, "Timmy, you don't, you never will know just what your coming now means to me."

"What about that 'presiding Wisdom,'" he ventured in a low voice, "or *is* it Chance?"

She threw him a queer little look that puzzled him but did not answer; and he followed her about the plants and palms while Nadja poured the coffee.

"Jove, this is great—a full-blown roof garden,"

he exclaimed with deep appreciation, stopping and taking a long breath.

"That is the idea," she assented, "but with extra trimmings; a velvet sky such as the poor North never knows; and a—something——"

"Yes, yes," he hurried. "Don't mention it. Definitions are inadequate. I thought, at first, it might be the champagne instead of mere ozone. These native duffers are jolly right to turn down the vulgar juice of the grape."

"Timmy! What mischief have you been getting into?" she cried, in dismay.

"Oh! nothing. Really nothing, I assure you." But he flushed up slightly under cover of the darkness, and his eye rested on Nadja, rather reminiscently, she thought.

Later, she had time to observe him as he stretched luxuriously on one of the thick Kairouan carpets, cigarette lighted, the mystery of the starlight enfolding them, and listened while Nadja's elfin touch brought little preliminary sobs and snatches of tune from her *dar'bouka*. Mabrouk smoked silently beside her where she sat, Arabwise, against a giant-heliotrope bush. He, too, was noting the athletic, well-knit stranger, the thick crop of dark hair that the night breeze lifted

lightly about the temples, the odd contrast of the limpid blue eyes with the straight tanned cheeks; and not missing, the while, a single movement of the white hands upon the *dar'bouka* beside him. The girl glanced at Sabine with a little look of intelligence. Then into the soft night came a low, minor, barbaric song, a syncopated thing with an insistent, pulsing threne that pressed upon one spot until it bruised, yet caressed and exulted, too; with gasps of tenderness and gusts of passion, then trailed away in unexpected cadence.

The singer's voice was sweet and pure with a stray quiver in it and that thrilling quality of maturity which lies in the voice of the tropics irrespective of age. To the Western listener, it seemed to open out past vistas of passion and unrest and unattainment, the tragedy of decadence, the unyielded secret of the East. He watched the girl's wonderful immature beauty that was full of sensuous promise, the unconscious movements of her lithe, undeveloped body so healthfully vital yet so absolutely unathletic; then Mabrouk's dark chiseled face and inscrutable eyes under his turban's gleam. And his glance came back to Sabine, the familiar Sabine of a lifetime, now, through these others, suddenly grown strangely

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alien and remote. The significance of a life utterly foreign and unknown to him, of an experience he might not share, touched her to a semblance of unreality almost, now that the first excitement of arrival was past. So might we meet again our near and dear ones in the strangeness of the star-worlds.

She had, indeed, taken a tremendous step beyond him, he reflected, as he sat there within the spell of the *dar'bouka*. That he would catch up with her was his swift inward resolve. Exoticism was creeping into him through every pore.

The low surge of the myriad night sounds rose to them like the tumult of distant surf. At intervals, the strident cry of the Arab women *en fête* cut through the undertone in a weird, high, prolonged tremolo. Some women were dancing over in the soldiers' quarter by the Kasbah.

It was late when they came indoors, and Mabrouk carried off Townsend for a stroll through the town.



CHAPTER VII

THE KADHI'S HOSPITALITY

DELIGHTFUL days followed filled with tourist satisfactions to Townsend, in spite of the heat which the morning and evening sea dip alone made endurable. There were sunrise expeditions to the various Roman ruins of which not a few center about Bemblah; pilgrimages to the local *marabouts*; even shopping descents upon the meagerly stocked *souk* with a resultant heterogeneous and amazing spoil. Then long hours of lounge and pleasant talk through the hot afternoons in the cool of the cloistral patio. Under Mabrouk's tutelage Townsend soon got to know the unedited edition, as it were, of the Arabic city. He saw all that he could see and much that he shouldn't. And the easy, gliding days that wound their shadowy arms in an endless chain of sunshine and starshine soon came to wind him, too, in their soft net; until he felt it didn't after all really matter if he never went

back to the great ant-hill that is called the Occident. He began to feel that the mystery which separates the East and West lies in the quality of temperament, and not in knowledge or achievement; in the contemplative attitude of the old civilizations to which we, in turn, will come; after we have tired of our playthings—our iron-clad and air-filled toys and explosives—have outgrown our games of theories and politics and cults and come to the higher thought and science of man himself, his destinies and place in the infinitude of the creations. And men of this Eastern temperament—grown-ups—are everywhere. They are not parked in latitudes nor dyed in the wool of climates. In the West they usually sit in doctoral robes apart, and make utterance *ex cathedra* from pulpit and rostrum. In the East they sit cross-legged and in rags by the wayside and repeat the appellations of Allah, fingering their beads.

These, to Sabine, were days of reconquered serenity and ideals. In the brusque renewal of the old comradeship, the reassertion of old influences and friendship, she recovered one by one her captured outposts, her abandoned defenses, even to her heart's citadel. And, strange to say, during the hours with Townsend, that renewed all the

easy, Western world intercourse, Antoninus found his readjustment in her life. He was the indispensable *trait d'union* between the old and the new, the solvent that made two such men as Townsend and Ben Zegri possible in her life. She saw, too, that there could be no going back. She was beyond that. She had taken her forward step and the horizon had opened, and never again should her orientation be just the same. The forces and environment of her new life would have been powerless to effect this without Antoninus. It was the Saracen as well as the Parisian in him that had made the transition not only possible, but so gradual and complete.

He had not allowed her to remain without news of him. Absent, his care still managed to envelop her daily life while making no claim to any part of it. Portions of his letters she read to Timmy, whose interest in this many-sided cosmopolite was growing apace with his knowledge of the land which had contributed to evolve him.

He sent messages of welcome to the American guest with repeated expressions of regret at his own continued detention and consequent inability to entertain him in person. He trusted, however, that his absence might not be unduly prolonged.

Meantime, he suggested various points of interest to be seen about Bemblah many of which were already known to Sabine.

So it was, one glorious day in early autumn when the parched earth had again greened forth in answer to the first September rains, that sunrise found the little party of explorers well on their way to the ruins of *El Kazar*, half palace, half fortress, that perched by the sea a few miles beyond Es Skahnes. The place stood in from the main road and was accessible from land by a rocky trail, sand blown and difficult. This they gayly covered on donkeys, that looked to Townsend like overgrown gray rabbits. Mabrouk bestrode his with the Biblical serenity of a Balaam, keeping his yellow slippers tucked up, in shortened stirrups, well out of harm's way. After some observation, Townsend, feeling he was out to learn, voted for the methods of one of the drivers, who was about his own length of limb, and tried letting his feet trail on the ground. This rested his knees if it did not spare his shoe leather. The ease with which the donkey-driver kept his flapping *babouches* nicely balanced on the apex of his toe was a matter of profound admiration to Townsend. He had a wager on with Nadja, which he kept perpetu-

ally losing and renewing from start to finish, as to the precise moment they would drop from their proud eminence.

At a small gully, running with a few inches of water from the recent rains, Nadja's donkey refused to pass. Planting his toy forefeet irrevocably in the slippery rock he declined to hear either argument or persuasion. The girl wouldn't use her stick nor allow the driver to do so.

"He has his own opinions and sticks to them. That's a donkey's privilege," she said.

"Well, I've taken two snapshots of him in the enjoyment of his privilege," said Townsend, putting up his Kodak. "What comes after?"

Mabrouk spoke a quiet word to the drivers. Nadja slid to the ground, and the two men gently laid hands on the little donkey, one at the head, the other at the tail, and carried him over the gully.

"He didn't want to wet his feet," explained the girl, when they were on their way again. "And I don't blame him."

"Pretty Polly," encouraged Townsend, giving the little beast a poke in the ribs. "He was afraid of being drowned."

Townsend was now indulging in the novel and

vigorous exercise of walking up the steep ascent with a foot on either side of his mount, to Sabine and Nadja's great enjoyment.

Access to the ruins by sea was easier. There was a small landing place at the foot of the rocks where broken steps still wound some thirty feet above to a plateau that formed the first terrace of the palace. Parts of this were still virtually habitable. A suite of apartments giving on the great upper terrace with several kitchens, stables, and dependencies might yet afford a pretentious, though decrepit, hospitality. These had indeed been rented recently to a party of prospecting engineers by Ben Zegri to whom the whole property had reverted through some intricacy of Moslem inheritance. But, for the most part, the dismantling was complete. Vast courts encumbered by fallen masonry, broken fountains, and crumbling arches; enclosed gardens and orange-ries long since run riot or choked by the invading sands; dislocated stairways and breakneck passages all combined to make of this but recently inhabited palace of the Ben Osman a veritable and picturesque ruin.

The point of supremest interest to the visitors was the baths.



These comprised a large underground gallery and grottos, hewn in the rock below sea-level, and reached by a stairway that let directly from the private apartments of the palace. Protected from the encroachment of sand and choke of rank growth, this stairway was perfectly practicable, and the tourists had no difficulty in pursuing the long descent. The high arched cave, extending some distance into the rock, was amply lighted and aerated from above by several large and ingeniously contrived slanting apertures. The temperature was delightfully uniform. The bathing pools were irregularly grouped about a central raised floor that ran between arches cut in the ruddy-brown rock. A descent of two steps from this floor conducted to the separate pools which, themselves, lay a step lower and held water from three to four feet in depth. Several of the pools were quite large, spreading out as much as forty feet, and were evidently intended for swimming. The water was green and crystal clear, renewing itself from the sea but so gradually as always to preserve the temperature of the baths, and the practical absence of tide in the Mediterranean prevented any accumulation of stale water or stagnant growth. There was, however, a system

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of flooding and emptying the pools, if tradition were to be trusted; but this was now unknown, even its existence long forgotten. The whole place was an anachronism, mystic, weird in a sense, with its cryptic, sifted light that held in the still green pools, its cathedral cool and hush while outside the fierce tropic sun beat down in unavailing fury.

It was a happy morning of exploration, of surprises and discoveries. Mabrouk explained the distribution of the women's quarters, that haremlik so keenly interesting to the Occidental, so simple to the Oriental mind.

The court of the harem, dainty as a jewel, was of rose-colored marble, with a high central fountain and delicate mauresque arches hung between slender pillars, exquisite in their tracery of arabesque and lotus-flower. These supported the gallery above, fronted by a superb lace-work screen of gilt bronze trellis. Everywhere were the subtle, languorous beauty and sensuous idealism that characterize the Morisco-Spanish architecture of the sixteenth century. Everywhere were gardens of Persian roses throttled now by the vandal sands, but surviving here and there in bursts of wild rose tree, wraiths of the perished denizens of the past.

Timmy was invaded by a delicious retrospective melancholy, new to him, in thus digging out the secrets of this palace of Islâm. These broken fountains and ruined gardens and soft lapping waters in the baths below! Once their liquid voices had marked the monotone of their dream life to lotus-marked odalisques. For them had the roses exhaled deliring incense from their crimson thuribles, the lapping sea brought the opaline treasure of its caress to lull the torpor of their captivity. Choked are the fountains, gone, the roses of Ispahan!

Of course Mabrouk could have told him some things. That the vast kitchens, where whole sheep had roasted upon the spit and pyramids of *kouskoussi* were turned out unremittingly, formed a far otherwise important feature of the bygone life than did the dancing court, and that outlawry, schemes of pillage and marauding occupied the leisures of the Corsair Ben Osman, more than did idling among the women of his harem. But he did not. Timmy was bent upon seeing the East through Western eyes. For them the Orient means the harem—four wives and *ghawazi*, *almehs*, plus the rest—or it means nothing. So Mabrouk let him see it his own way. The American people,

according to an American Professor, is admitted abroad to be the most idealistic of peoples as amply shown by their literature. Mabrouk had not had the advantage of listening to the Professor; but he was quite willing that the idealism of his new friend have full swing, and that the departed Ben Osman—whose tribe had not increased—should profit, to the utmost, of the national phrenological bump.

A little before noon found them foregathered on the terrace, tired by their sight-seeing, happy and hungry. Ben Zegri had hospitably ordered luncheon to be served them here, excusing himself, at the last moment, from making one of their party. At this defection Timmy was inconsolable.

"It's like the ghost without Hamlet," he complained, "the Pyramid of Gizeh in the back yard. His Excellency the Kadhi gives atmosphere to the ruins. Besides, he is quite my idea of the sporting parson, you know. Plays the smooth clerical game to perfection and keeps his trump card, whatever it is, up his sleeve—and you guessing."

Nadja laughed at his peevish air. She liked the big American with his frank, offhand manner and real respect, though she only half understood him



and never, by chance, caught the motive for his ready laugh.

Mabrouk was finer. He recognized the mastery that lay under the easy indifference, the force of the undertow beneath the ripple and swirl of the light, eddying surface. The two men had fallen into a pleasant camaraderie, which, under proper conditions, might even develop into friendship. But the adaptability was altogether on the Moslem's side. It was his flexible mind that sprang with quick suppleness to the measure of the American's rigid and—to the other—rather immature viewpoint. But Timmy never suspected this—self-adjudged—superiority of the Arab. To his surprise, he found that the difference between them seemed largely one of dress; of a thicker coating of tan gained in the Arab's longer outing as a race in the earth's ethnologies; of a religion that flaunted itself proudly in outward observances whereas good form relegated his own daily worship to a dressing-room rite. Could he but once have peeped into the privacy of Mabrouk's home, he would have recoiled before the chasm of separation its contrast with his own home life would have shown him. But Mabrouk's French, his European manners were perfect. He managed his knife and

fork and the niceties of the dinner table with consummate ease; whereas Timmy should have made but a poor showing with his fingers at an Arabian feast. No doubt, too, he should have been superiorly proud of his inability. Yet superiority rests with the man who equally can and cannot. Excess, even in virtue, is a breaking of the law since perfection is equilibrium. Mabrouk's ethics were older than the American's, and he felt it.

Shadowed by the ruined wall and further protected from above by an improvised tent-fly, lunch was laid out upon a Kairouan *kali*, or central carpet. About this were spread others, smaller, with cushions and tables a foot high, one for each guest; and upon these were set cigarettes and sweetmeats, a tiny coffee cup, and, in a slender amphora, a single Persian rose, this to be tucked behind the ear, later on.

The illimitable sea stretched before them, softly breathing as if cradled to sleep. Floods of sunlight poured from the sky upon it until sky and sea seemed to fuse into one vast unity of enchantment and mystery, one enormous, elemental soul. A lassitude that was full of sweetness and appeal saturated the air and gradually impregnated their very being with the divine languor of the East,



the essence of repose. It was all exquisite to Timmy.

By this time he was not entirely unacquainted with the Arabic menu nor unappreciative of its excellence. He sat cross-legged on his carpet like the others and partook in succession of the copious repast the Kadhi's hospitality had provided.

There were first what he should have called croquettes of highly spiced and saffroned mutton; followed squares of fried tuna fish and tomato, this, too, peppered and capered to the highest achievement of smarting perfection; then, pyramids of red-hot pimented *kouskoussi* with its accompaniment of steamed chicken, served in individual basins of glazed earthenware; after which came spinach, enfolded in pastry and equally peppered to the limit of lingual endurance; and this terminated the substantial part of the meal. Dates in thick sour cream were then served, by way of a preliminary breather. After which they entered upon a prolonged orgy of sweet dishes—cloying pastries of endless device and flavor, aromatized pastes and hashed compounds, where fruits and flowers and spices and essences and extracts left a bewildering taste that carried the

Westerner quite outside all previous experiences: the dining-room to leave with him an impression of hair-dresser and pharmacy, florist and beauty emporium all in one. There were claret for the *Roumis* and *bacch*—a preparation of honey and tamarinds—and clear chilled water; and there were forks which Nadja and Mabrouk laughingly discarded, rolling their *kouskoussi* with the tips of their fingers in a dexterous way that quite defied imitation.

Before removing all, a couple of servants passed with the *aftaba*, a slender brass pitcher, from which one poured scented water upon the fingers of the guests while the other held the small brass bowl and offered the *bachkir*—the ornamented napkin. Coffee was brought, cigarettes lighted. Madaoud had a narghileh. And, steeped in the radiance of the Tunisian day, they leaned back and shared the joy of living.

Timmy's eyes narrowed in assumed modesty as he spoke languidly from behind blue and white wreaths.

"I am a three-tailed Basha with many wives—I have others shut up in a court and have been ministered to by three good boys. That's right for princess, isn't it, Madaoud?"

await the introduction by the black personage—you know the chap, I don't like to say his name in English——”

“*El Mokhci*,” helped out Mabrouk. “It's quite correct to use it in Arabic. He's the family nurse.”

“Thank you,” said Timmy gratefully. “Well, I'm waiting while he summons the *ghawazi*, the *almehs*, the *qah'bas*”—but Nadja here interrupted with a little exclamation, putting her hands up to her ears.

“They, the ‘*qah'bas*,’ don't belong here,” explained Mabrouk quietly.

“I really beg your pardon, Nadja,” said Timmy, “I at once withdraw the last element from my Basha—three-tailed—household. I am quite contented, I assure you, to take *only* what's lawfully coming to me. Allah is great! I think I shall have another narghileh. Tell me, Mabrouk, what are you in the scheme of this stage setting?”

“I can only be the Basha's brother. In which case one of the *beyas* should be my wife,” smiled back Mabrouk.

“I must say,” interposed Sabine, “I feel realistically Eastern in the way I am bandied about

between Your Excellencies. I think I shall have to be the *masbiyat* [the mother of small children] and order you all to your siesta."

"You don't like me as a Moslem?" queried Timmy, aggrieved.

"I fear I like you too well," she returned. "The petticoats seem to be the needed touch."

"My friend," said Timmy aside and confidentially to Mabrouk, "beware of the sting that lies under the honey of a woman's tongue."

The Arab took his narghileh from his mouth and looked critically at the silver mouthpiece.

"We have many proverbs that say much to the same effect," he returned. "But we have also one that says, 'He who seeks to surprise the honey-bee of her sweets receives her sting.'"

Nadja clapped her hands gayly—"There!"

"Don't try to put wisdom into him, Mabrouk," said Sabine. "I have tried to for twenty years and you see with what results. It is too bad you haven't your *gimbri* here, Nadja."

"I'm sure to find a ruin of a *dar'bouka* somewhere about," exclaimed Mabrouk, starting to his feet.

"No, song is for the night," said Nadja, detaining him. "It is nicer to talk. Tell us what you

know of the Ben Osman," as he resumed his former place on the carpet.

"Your people must have know them well?" questioned Sabine, at once interested.

"Yes. In the time of my father's father, the Ben Osman were an old family allied to the best blood in the land. Your mother's people"—to Nadja,—“were connections of theirs, or I am mistaken. One, at least, of the daughters of the house of Abd el Manoubi married into the Osman family.”

Nadja clapped her hands. “How nice! Some far-away Nadja may have lived here in the palace and dipped into the beautiful moon-colored water in the baths below. I felt it! It was *her* rose garden we found, where the *mirhab* is.” The thought seemed to fascinate her.

“Ben Zegri, it seems, owns the whole place now?” asked Townsend.

“Yes, it reverted to him through a distant relative. The Ben Osman male heirs direct failed.”

“But he seems to do nothing with it. If I owned such a glorious place as this I should never rest until I had restored it, replanted it, and re-peopled it.”

“Yes, with a house-party of your yachting

New York and Paris friends," suggested Sabine.

"That is not a bad idea."

"But I wonder the Kadhi himself does not use it in any way. It is quite near his villa at Es Skahnès—not above a mile I should say, by the sea."

"It seems he does. His family, I understand, often use the baths during their summer stay at Es Skahnès.

"What is his family?" asked Timmy. "Has he children, and the usual allotment in the matter of wives?"

"He has a son, two wives and daughters, I believe," answered Mabrouk.

"Two?" said Timmy, at once interested. "Are they beautiful? Tell me about them."

Sabine cast a deprecating look at Mabrouk and they both laughed, he, amused at her manner.

"My dear Timmy," she said, "what a Giaour you are! It's the height of incorrection to discuss a man's wives in public. I'm sure Mabrouk is highly scandalized."

The young fellow laughed frankly, giving a disclaiming shrug.

"He can wrap his ears in his turban," said Timmy, imperturbably.

"Nothing of the kind," said Mabrouk, "pray go on," turning to Sabine. "I know something of the Kadhi's wives myself."

"Oh, Mabrouk, *kih*h, *kah*h! [fie, for shame!]" she exclaimed in laughing raillery. "What *will* Nadja here think of you!"

Mabrouk looked at the girl and she rosied prettily. "Oh! his reputation was rent to ribbons long ago," she said.

"He never had one," said Timmy. "So what of the Kadhi's beautiful wives? Do you know them?" he asked of Sabine.

"Not the second wife. I have visited their city house and met Zorah, the mother of his boy, and she *is* incontestably beautiful, the perfection, to me, of a certain type of brilliant, dark, sensuous beauty." She trailed into momentary abstraction as the image of Zorah conjured before her. "He keeps her well in hand now," she said, half to herself, "but later on—well, she might be a dangerous woman to thwart."

Mabrouk's eyes were fixed on her quietly while he listened intently. Timmy was openly devouring every word. It was curious to note the difference between the two.

"Jove!" said Timmy. "I wish she'd happen to

come along now. I've been looking out for just that very thing. Let's, oh! let's play Basha! What's the bathing hour?"

They all laughed gayly at his whimsy. "Foolish boy," said Sabine. "I'll tell you all the Arabian fairy-tales you want when we get home. Just now I want, I insist upon my siesta."

"You shall have it, *ya Lalla*. Let me aid you to arise." He helped her to her feet and settled her in her long-chair, thoughtfully provided by the Kadhi's care.

His servants had packed their mules and were gone long ago. Their own donkey drivers were fast asleep within call. The heat descended like a pall. The young men continued to talk for a time, in low tones, but gradually the irresistible languor of the siesta hour claimed its own. Once Timmy looked up.

"If I meet her, *bi roabi* [by the Creator] I'll introduce myself," he said, but Sabine did not answer. She had dropped to sleep; and Nadja only smiled. Soon the young men slept also, stretched at length upon their carpets.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEATH-POOLS OF EL KAZAR

NADJA alone did not sleep. She looked out, with wide, unseeing eyes, into the merging sea and sky, and dreamed the long, long dreams of her joyous fifteen years. Like the sea to the sky before her, the little Nadja was touching to the infinitudes of encompassing womanhood, and her girlish beauty already held something of its overhanging mystery. Each day her fitful loveliness gained in poise, in *ampleur* and allurements. The childish repose of the full mouth took on maturer lines of tenderness and seduction. A new expression came into the clear, impersonal gaze—a soft reticence, like the shadow of a day cloud, that curtained the growing secret of womanhood in the mirror of her dark, translucent eyes.

After a time the heat became oppressive to her. She seemed to lie in molten glass. And the appeal of the sea, a longing to lie in the cool caress of

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the floating enchantment about her, became over-mastering.

She left her chair softly, careful not to arouse the sleepers, and, lightfooted, crossed the terrace to the haremlik, taking the stairway to the baths. Descending, the change from the heat and daze without to the cloistral shade was like a plunge into exquisite moonlight. She laughed aloud as she ran lightly on, the spirit of her adventure seizing her. She reached the platform gallery and, stepping down, followed along the narrow way to the largest, which was also the farthest pool. Lightly the old Arabian love song rose to her lips:

O pearl! beyond praise, beyond price,
Be mine while I drink of thy fire;
Thy white cup, like nacréd ice,
Holds thy heart, like the flame of desire.

She took out the pins from her hair and shook down the silken mass about her; and, leaning over, she looked below into the still, pellucid water. Through its crystal she could see to the smooth worn rock beneath, could catch the look her own laughing eyes threw back to her out of the nimbus of her gleaming hair. She fancied it was the ancestral

Nadja smiling out to her from the mirror of the past. So, indeed, might she have looked, a rosy naiad laving in the velvet basin of the world-old rock. Laughingly, the girl blew a kiss, warm from her living lips, to the wraith daughter of her race. And from the crystal-globe of the pool her kiss came back to her, decorporealized, impalpable as that past whose memory she evoked.

Eagerly she removed her clothing to the light chemise, bound her braids about her head. With a little laugh and tremor of delight she thrust her foot into the touch of the water. It was cool, the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere, and pungent with brine. With childlike eagerness she plunged her lithe limbs into the thrill and joy of it, then abandoned her young body to its yielding delight.

Sitting, the water reached to her shoulders. She rose, and went on to where, several yards away, a further descent of two steps brought it up to her shoulders while standing. She swam a little. But the place here was too confined to do so with pleasure or even with ease; and, after further exploration had revealed a varying depth, the result undoubtedly of erosion of the rock bottom by the sea, she came back to her first place where

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there were about three feet of water and a uniform depth.

Lying upon her opaline water-couch in that strange, subdued light, with the caress of the gently lapping water about her, Nadja felt an immense sense of well-being. Forgetful alike of her friends as of the lapse of time, unconsciously she gave herself to the utter happiness of the moment. Gently, to the swaying of her body, did she rock the nurslings of her fancy in the cradle of her innocent day-dreams; and it was with a sudden sense of the passing of day that, after a time, she noted it was growing dark. The filtering light seemed to wane to mellow twilight. It must be late, and they would be looking for her. She started up and, as she did so, the remaining light shut off abruptly. She was in darkness, except for a pale green glimmer from the distant gallery.

Amazed and disquieted, she started toward the point of light, reaching about first for her clothes which should be on the ledge, almost beside her. But she could not at once find the place where she had laid them. In her search she made a false step, dropping to the greater depth, into water not, as before, to the shoulders, but reaching now nearly to her chin. And at the same instant, in a

flash of sensation, the shock came to her that the water was warm. In an overwhelming rush of realization she knew what this meant. It was sun-heated water from the open sea that was flowing in and flooding the pools.

At once she knew the imminence of her danger. She must reach the gallery, and she had not an instant to lose. It was quite dark now except for that distant glimmer, a lodestar to guide her; and toward it she turned. But whether she mistook her direction or stumbled on the uneven bottom, her next step plunged her beyond her depth. Throwing out the water from her mouth as she came up, she paddled a moment, then felt cautiously for bottom. She found she must be in about six feet of water, and rising, she struck out valiantly, feeling carefully the while for the arches, and always toward the distant light. But a few strokes brought her against a wall over which she in vain tried to reach. She turned and, bewildered, she seemed to encounter the rock on every side.

A sickening feeling fastened upon her. The certainty that all about her the sea must be creeping in stealthily, inexorably, weighted her limbs and caused her young muscles to chill with a mor-

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tal numbness. She had lost her bearings in the darkness, and suddenly the absolute helplessness of her position crushed her. And something else than the water, a sudden nameless dread seemed to creep up in the darkness and stifle her, a sense of malevolence and hatred and evil purpose directed toward herself. Child of a highly strung and superstitious race, the slow realization that a deliberate purpose must underly this horrible thing that was happening overwhelmed her, killing her joy of life, even her wish to live. Why struggle! Why beat the senseless rock with her cry! None could hear her here. With a supreme sigh of despair, an infinite lassitude, she abandoned hope. Her Islâmic inheritance of fatalism pushed to the front. Thus was it written. Her beautiful dream of life was over.

A sob welled up from the very heart of her. But upon it, from the very heart of her, followed quick revulsion. Her whole being that was not of Islâm rose up against the fate that consigned her to oblivion in this black pool; where, had she but known it, women had died before, and helpless youth gone struggling down in darkness, swiftly and silently, in these death-pools of El Kazar. But now she would fight. Her heart upleaped to

life. To the last remaining measure of her splendid vitality she would struggle for it, for her apportionment of happiness. She flung upward, outward, to loose herself from the stealthy, tepid upcreep of the water, and once more she fixed her eyes bravely upon the pale disk of light that showed where safety lay. She would reach it *in ch' Allah*.

Bravely and with the energy and hope of her vigorous youth, she breasted the silent water in the darkness, pushing on with long, powerful strokes. When, with the full force of her gathered impetus, her head struck against something, and with an unconscious cry, her senses crashed to blinding night.

CHAPTER IX

ZORAH STRIKES

SABINE had slept for perhaps an hour. She suddenly awoke to alert consciousness, as sometimes happens, her perceptions sharpened to the sense of some imperative demand upon her, of immediate need for action. Looking about, she at once missed Nadja. The two men slept on. She did not stop to reason out the girl's absence—there were a dozen obvious reasons why she may have left the terrace. She had but to wait a little and Nadja would return.

Who shall put a precise limit to our senses and say that we have not others, embryonic perhaps and destined to develop; or else the lingering remnants of a completer primeval equipment which has disappeared with our savage needs. We certainly possess the glimmerings of a sixth which may not be that of propinquity, like the bat's, but of the propinquity of danger.

In an instant Sabine had noiselessly crossed the terrace and was in the apartments of the haremluk, calling gently, repeatedly. But a short survey was sufficient to convince her Nadja was not here. Beneath were the orangeries and rose-gardens, especially that of the *mihrab*. Leaning over, she could command a comprehensive view of all these, and the young girl was not in any of them. With a growing premonition of misfortune, she sped through the encumbered passages and down the dismantled stairways calling softly, but clearly in the silence. In the large hall of the harem she stopped, moved by a strong instinct that she was nearing what she sought. Slowly and carefully she passed among the broken pillars, but only her own light step whispered back to her in the empty hush. Suddenly she stopped to listen, her quick ear seeming to catch another sound. It was nothing. And yet she felt that a presence had preceded her. Something living and breathing had just gone before her through the chill, inanimate spaces. She went quickly down the sentinel lines of columns and out, by a sharp turn, into a sort of vestibule, and here abruptly she stopped. On the ground before her lay a scarf—she picked it up—embroidered and with long, fringed ends, the

start she had brought herself in the rue St. Honoré and given to Zorah. Her instant recognition of it only increased her fear. What could the Arab woman's secret presence here at this time mean? Not an instant now did she pause. With unerring instinct she doubled on her course, turned the angle nimbly, and came back swiftly into the hall of the hotel and she confronted Zorah.

"*Eh! m'bonn' (good)!*" she gasped.

The Arab woman stood at bay. For the fraction of a second they looked into each other's eyes, then Sabine went on in quick, impetuous Arabic:

"Where is the child? Speak, Zorah."

"How know I? Am I her nursemaid?"

The silent, evasive answer undermined all of Sabine's intense, investigative fear. She moved a step nearer, and looking steadily into the wondering eyes before her, and their widening, their dropped pupils, and their confusion. When she spoke, her words fell like the stroke of a blow on the ears of the woman's resolve.

"Zorah, you must believe me. I have seen you here, and I took the part of your presence in this vast white street for witness that I once gave to you. Listen well. Let them come to Nadya and you are lost; lost, do you understand?"

The Kadhi himself cannot save you from the law. And he will kill you before he sees you dragged into the *Roumi* courts."

"As well that, as that he should marry her!" The words burst forth in an explosion of bitterness and hate. At them, her listener stood transfixed.

"Marry her? What can you mean? Are you mad? What folly is this you speak?"

"The truth," the woman answered passionately. "Does not my lord Kadhi visit her? as is the way with the shameless *Roumiyas*. And with the intention to make of her his wife, for she is *meslema* and not of the class to be a *sourriya* [concubine]. You must know. She is in your house."

A moment, Sabine stared her blank incredulity into the dark, distorted face before her, and Zorah could not but be convinced by the amazed denial in her look.

"Poor child!" she said at length, pityingly, for the violent marks of suffering in the face of the beautiful creature touched her. "Is that it?" She took her hand. "Zorah, I swear to you, it is not true. Will you believe me? The lord Kadhi comes—to explain to me the sacred writings." Involuntarily, her eyelids lowered. "I had

thought—to study the creed of Islâm. And Nadja . . . I hope she will one day marry Mabrouk. . . And now speak, Zorah. What do you know of Nadja?”

But Zorah had turned like a wild thing and was running across the hall to the great ruined fountain. Kneeling down, she thrust her arm deep into the stone conduit that was half choked with débris and, flattened on the ground, she pulled with all her might at a plug within. It sprang back at last with a snap. She threw some loose stone and rubbish over the opening, and when she stood up, breathless, she was trembling and, in spite of the exertion, ashen pale.

“Quick, or it will be too late,” she said in low, frightened tones. “She is in the baths below. They empty faster than they flood, for there was quick need often to hide all trace. Yet even now it may be too late. . . . *Ya Lalla!*” she entreated, “thou wilt not tell? . . . *Ya Lalla!*” she called; but there was no answer.

For, with instant revulsion, Sabine’s pity had gone as she grasped the enormity of the woman’s attempt, the cowardice and treachery of her abominable plan. Without a word or glance she had turned and was flying up the crazy



stail, her cry preceding her across the terrace and bringing the sleepers, breathless, to their feet.

"Nadja—save her! Quick, quick, the baths!" Her voice rang strident, unmistakable, and with one look into her face the two men leaped past her to the stair, Mabrouk in the lead like a bounding deer.

Miracles are wrought, unknown, every day. Nadja's unconscious cry, as she struck the rock, saved her. Though feeble enough, echoed through the vaulted silence it rang like a rebounding tocsin to those above. From above, the baths seemed dark to the two men. But they gave it no further thought. And when they gained the main floor they could see perfectly. The gallery was under two feet of water, and as they ran across it guided by the cry, Mabrouk was flinging off *djebba* and jacket and slippers and was down at once among the pools in water to his chin, while Sabine and Townsend waited. Her floating clothes showed where she must have gone down. But in an instant the unconscious girl arose at some distance from them and in another, Mabrouk had her across his arms and was back in the gallery.

As they came out onto the terrace above, Townsend who was left with the floating clothes,

threw a backward glance down the stair. In that short time the water had subsided. The sheen of the wet rock in the jungle light, and the fresh tang of the sea were all that remained of the Arab woman's mad attempt.

As he emerged, his eyes sought Mabrouk's. What did it all mean? But a disclaiming lift of the shoulders was all the enlightenment he received, and with it he had to be satisfied, for the present.

It was, however, in a much chastened spirit that he stood apart with Mabrouk while the latter put himself to rights. For the moment, their services were not needed. Mother Clémens had, most opportunely, appeared; and her skilled mastery of the situation had promptly revived the unconscious girl whose youth and splendid physique had quickly triumphed over her mishap. She was able to sit her donkey down the steep path to the closed carriage that Mother Clémens authoritatively summoned from the Kadhi's villa.

So soon as the three women were alone, for Mabrouk and Townsend were returning to town with the donkeys, Sabine voiced the question that hovered on her lips:

"How did you ever happen to come to El Kazar, *ma Mère*? It was a miracle."

Mother Clémens threw a quick, warning glance toward Nadja before replying.

"Yes, it is fortunate— But you would have done everything that was necessary. I have no fear of that. My being here is simple. I came out to the Kadhi's villa—you know it's a pleasant walk, and it's a long time now since I've been there. Zorah was out, so I came on by the sea to the ruins, knowing you were there." Their eyes met. "But I was very late."

"You wanted to see Zorah particularly to-day?" Sabine questioned, in a casual tone.

"Yes. I am deeply interested in the Kadhi's wife lately,"—her tone was light, and she smiled down at Nadja whose hand she held close in her own,—“indeed, ever since I have discovered she is deeply interested in *you*. Hassan is an intelligent boy,” she added, irrelevantly. “Every day he brings me fruit from the Kadhi's gardens, which I buy—and also other things, which I buy.”

There was silence. Sabine was beginning to plumb to the complex currents that lay below the apparently shallow surface of the life about her.

Presently Nadja spoke musingly.

"Someone must have flooded the pools." She looked at Mother Clémens. "Was it the Kadhi's wife?" she asked quietly. The nun nodded.

"I see," returned the girl simply. She understood the ways of Arab women better than did Sabine.

As they sped along, a haiked figure drew aside for them to pass. Once again Zorah's dark eyes encountered Nadja's beauty, now drooping and bruised like that of a broken flower. In the eager, passionate look she gave the girl all the vindictive rancor of her undisciplined nature was gone. In its place was supreme relief as well as appeal and abasement. At least, that is how Mother Clémens interpreted it in the light of her all-embracing charity and forgiveness; for she nodded slightly to the veiled figure, raising her finger to her lips in promise of silence.

But Sabine's glance was like the sting of a whip-lash. The elemental passions pushed to such lengths had small place in her indulgence.

CHAPTER X

"I, TOO, HAVE CONQUERED"

THE expedition to El Kazar, with its quasi tragic dénouement, was the source of sudden enlightenment to the two Americans.

Townsend, after the careless manner of the Occidental, had hitherto looked upon these silent veiled women of the East as a species of marionette, pulled by strings invisible, of course, to his philistine eye, but vaguely accepted as added figurines in the Oriental Punch and Judy show put on for tourist entertainment. And if further opportunity had modified, for him, this view, it brought him to consider them as unthinking, irresponsible children, naughty and troublesome at times, no doubt, but incidents, not factors, in the social structure and intense life about him.

The episode at the ruins taught him otherwise. He learned that silence is not necessarily effacement. That the dissembling haik harbors untold

opportunity for espionage and intrigue. And he began to have the uncomfortable consciousness of being seen without himself seeing, of watchful eyes where his own were baffled, of being tracked, possibly, by some silent form where all were alike in form and silence. He laughingly confided something of this growing creepiness of impression to Mabrouk and was rather surprised at his assurance that the feeling was general. “We’re used to it, of course. But we’re all conscious of being watched. We men haven’t the women in the streets at our mercy as I have seen it is the way in France. On the contrary.” He laughed. “I’m afraid we’re great poseurs in the streets. You see, *we* do the strutting. Our women don’t have to strut.”

To Sabine, the incident at the baths was more startling and pregnant. With alarm, she realized the forces with which she had unwittingly been playing, the possibilities, even for destruction, in the feral passions she so carelessly aroused. Here, love and possession leaped out to their elemental limits, ignoring the iron restraints of a social convention which juggles at both with nonchalant hands and side-steps the consequences. It was not her fault if she had failed to grasp this little

point. She had grown up in a world which has emasculated passion into flirtation and given it over to youth as a plaything; to maturity as a disillusion, a cheat or a resignation—often, thank God, as life's supremest guerdon. But never, as here, had she realized love as the one only thing, the sole reason and excuse for our being here at all, the thing to be forced and held and fought for, with fierce jealousy and fiercer joy and death standing ever by, a close and grim umpire. Here, gunny sacks thrown into the Nile or Bosphorus, poison-dipped yatagan, sting of asp and scorpion were no far tales of Eastern legend but living, everyday methods in unchronicled use. The strident brutality of the revolver can find no place in the artistry of these countries next to the sun. But by whatever arm, death itself is the fact; and Sabine thought of little Nadja in the darkness of that death-trap and shuddered. Zorah had not hesitated. She would not hesitate again. Sabine saw an abyss yawn suddenly, there, where she had thought to take an easy hurdle into her neighbor's grassy meadow. And her recoil was swift and effectual.

As she reflected in the cool self-confrontation of her own room, away from Ben Zegri and the thrill

and call of his magnetic domination, she wondered at her own fatuity. What vanity and crying need for adulation, what life habit of lust for conquest had embarked her on this flirtation with the Kadhi? for she scornfully told herself it was little more. She had caught up the challenge of the man's first look with the avidity of a schoolgirl. Her inbred feminine right to freedom, even to speculation in the market of sentiment, had instantly asserted itself. And with her lifetime of anterior example, how could it be otherwise? Within her daily experience had been the pretty wage-earner become millionaire's wife and first lady of the land; tradesman's daughter become titled dame and mother of an historic line. The world and its possibilities lay open to the woman of her day through the door of self-bestowal. She knows no limitation but that of opportunity, no check but her own ethical perceptions and the loftiness of her personal character. And these last in her own case, Sabine reflected with some bitterness, had crumbled, almost fallen, under the disintegrating influences of her changed environment. For it was by no force or exercise of principle on her part, but by the most fortuitous of chances, the pure hazard of Timmy's arrival, with the train of cor-

rective influences and associations he produced, that had saved her from an act of irremediable folly. In her new abasement, she did not mince the terms of her self-arraignment. The fine lines of Antoninus's face rose before her, its high stamp of character and control, and that added pathetic look of those last days with her; a look of disappointment in her under the yearning, that brought a catch now in her throat and a rush of color up to the dark hair line. . . .

"Timmy," she asked suddenly, and somewhat irrelevantly he thought, "do you believe in hypnotic ascendancy?"

"Certainly," was his prompt answer. "I keep pace with the times. Hypnotism, telepathy, subliminal ego, and *tutti quanti*, down to chiaroscuro and angostura bitters."

"Timmy! Do be sensible," she laughed.

"Without being that, I assure you I am very serious," he returned, flinging away his cigarette and turning attentive eyes upon her.

"Well then, what should you do if, really, you thought you were under such control? I mean, how should you—well, stiffen your will, so to speak?"

"I can hardly say at such long range. I rather think I should try concentrating my feeble facul-

ties on 'Peter Piper picked a peck' or—the multiplication table would do as well."

"Thank you," she said.

"Don't mention it, pray. But why, may I ask——?"

"Oh! nothing," lightly. "I'm merely supposing a case."

He shot her a keen look.

"A ducking's a good thing," said he, dryly. "Oh! I don't mean for you," as she shrank laughingly, with a little shiver. "For the—er—hypnotist. Water cuts the mesmeric current. Want me to try?"

He looked decidedly ready to fit action to the words, and the tell-tale color painted her cheeks under the significance of his attitude.

"Heavens, Timmy," she began. But leaning over he took her two hands between his own and looked her in the eyes. "My dear Sabine," he said, "if someone is bothering you, let me fix him, won't you? There's not a mesmerist in the world that can withstand the counter passes I'll serve out to him, believe me. And it's only what's richly coming to him, whoever he is." But while she looked all her gratitude, she shook her head, smiling at his earnestness.

"What a finished Oriental you are! Such finessing—such masterly flank movement!"

"Gibe away, milady," returned he, imperturbably. "But 'fists to the fore' is telling tactics in 'most any clime. And good boxing's tempting, when there's a sleek soft white turban to go inside."

But when, with a gay wave of the hand, she was gone, the innocent blue eyes darkened to narrow belligerency.

"That hell of a Turk!" he muttered under his breath. And he made up his mind to stay where he was till Antoninus came back, if he stayed till Christmas.

Early the next morning Sabine's carriage set her down—almost a nereïd from her sea-bath—at the convent portal, and she found Mother Clémens saying her matins under the lemon trees. At sight of her, the religious closed her Office book.

The good nun's anxious vigilance had been greatly taxed in the past weeks. Since the wholly unlooked-for dénouement at the ruins of El Kazar, the situation had cleared in so far as Zorah's activities were concerned, and Hassan had little to report now at the Convent. Also, Mother Clémens bought less fruit. But she was less assured about Sabine. She hoped much from the presence of her com-

patriot, and it was with satisfaction and great relief she noted that the expression of slight exaltation had left her face, that the old ring and readiness of laugh had come back to replace the highly keyed manner of these last months.

Now, as she searched the changed and eager face before her, she felt her burden of anxiety about to drop from her. She raised her hands affectionately to Sabine's shoulders and looked earnestly into the shining eyes, silently questioning them.

"Yes, *ma Mère*." It was Sabine's first confession to her friend, her first admission of the other's tacit knowledge of the situation.

She took off her broad hat, as she might put aside an obsession, and flung back her head to the fresh sea air and slanting rays of the rising sun that glinted her dark hair to copper. "For the black bat, night, hath flown," she quoted softly to herself in English, and drew in a long, sweet breath of morning sunshine. Then she took Mother Clémens's hand.

"Cured," she said, whimsically. "And it was the picture of a little girl that did it, *ma Mère*; of the little girl I used to be. Would you believe I had forgotten all about her. And it was Timmy



—my old playfellow you know—who brought her back.” She smiled, but there were tears not far behind the smile. “I want you to send to the Kadhi, do you mind? and ask him to come here for only a few moments. Now. I shall wait.”

Mother Clémens went to send some one. But there was no need to wait, for the messenger met the Kadhi himself at the gate. He had noted which way Sabine’s carriage went from the beach and followed. He approached now, with a deep inclination to Mother Clémens. She moved to go, but Sabine detained her.

“No, *ma Mère*; not unless his Excellency wishes it.”

The Kadhi bowed his acquiescence, then turned to her. His face was drawn and gray even in the sunrise flush. Unflinchingly, she braced herself to meet his eyes. But in Ben Zegri’s deep glance was an entirely new note, one of diffidence, almost, and appeal, as well as pain; for before she spoke he knew it. He knew that he had lost her. He waited.

“Ben Zegri,” she began, crushing her hands together, and her voice, very low and trembling, rang infinitely true and sweet to the man before her; but she got no further. For he had done a

most unexpected and amazing thing. Stooping, there before Mother Clémens, he touched the hem of her white gown quietly, unaffectedly, to his lips. It meant untellable volumes to her intuition—regret, renunciation, and the avowed humility of atonement. And this from the Kadhi! Quick tears rushed to her eyes. “Need I say further?” she murmured brokenly, and Ben Zegri slightly shook his head. When, after a moment, he spoke, his voice was unsteady with feeling.

“Daughter of the *Roumis*, as the Prophet liveth, truly have I done my uttermost to win you. Siege have I made to soul and intelligence and will. For no faltering, forced surrender would I have, but your free and voluntary bestowal. And these have I won; yes, mine, all mine, for one glorious moment of possession. Alas! The thing I sought of price beyond all else, the heart, I never gained—not for one brief space of time. That is forever given to another, perhaps, to a worthier, keeping. And having it he has all; for the heart is the woman. . . . Who would prize the coffer, beautiful though it be, when the jewel it was made to hold is gone! Who would bend in worship before the glories of an empty shrine! . . . And the fault is not yours. For the treasure houses of the heart

are filled and sealed when the measures of the earth are laid, to be opened only when Allah wills Maktoub." He inclined his head in reverent acceptance; then raised it quickly and there was a splendid fire of energy in the magnetic eyes. "But defeat crushes not the strong. For them it spreads another golden field, one for victory over self. . . . I, too, have conquered."

A long moment he looked into her face, reading there the woman's sympathy and understanding that were veriest balm to him. Yet all the time his lucent gaze held hers, and even while her sympathies gave him readiest response, she kept repeating to herself, over and over mechanically, and with tense effort to grip her dissipating will, "seven times eight are fifty-six"—though she wasn't at all sure of it—"seven times nine are sixty-three," again and again. Until abruptly everything cleared away. Her knees stiffened under her. For the first time she felt the bruise of her own locked fingers, a quick release of her delaying heart beats. And she saw that a wan light of his old rare smile had come into Ben Zegri's strong face.

"It is my turn to go away," he was saying. "But afterwards. We shall need to meet again,

and before others. I want to tell you now, have no fear, *ya Lalla*. My dream is spent."

With the words, he seemed to draw away from her and into himself while he stood silently looking straight before him from levelled lids. And the ruddy sunlight appeared to invest his slight figure with a rare and priestly dignity as it lighted up the flowing spotless *djebba* and touched to fire the halo of shining turban about the calm, white face.

Slowly he pressed his fingers to his eyes; then raised them to his lips and forehead in the formal salutation.

"May the seven-fold peace of Allah, with the protection of our lord Mohammed enfold thee in happiness, always . . . *Mae es salaamou*."

From his white lips the words came to her, tranquil and remote. She knew them for the receding echo of an experience that was already closed. For a brief pause in the current of her life the surging flame of Islâm had caught her up. And its source-lighted Eastern fires had flashed forth to her the unsuspected abysses of her nature where laired her stark, primeval woman's soul. Then the light had gone out. The sophistication of ages, that sacred thing we call race, which, strongest of cosmic impulses, can never wholly revert to the elemental—

as porcelain can never again become clay—had reclaimed her, quietly and surely, as all natural forces resume their silent sway after some interruptive upheaval. And the benediction of Islâm, only what was great and beautiful in the glowing religion of the Prophet, now, by the mouth of its *imam*, set her apart, in peace.

She confronted his dispassioned, impenetrable look that now hung up a veil between his soul and hers. The door of that inner shrine was henceforth locked to her. But the benediction lingered. Reverently she bowed her head. "*Mae es salaam-ou*," she repeated after him, humbly.

He turned from her into the flagged walk. And behind him Mother Clémens, coming from the house, took the little Maltese porteress by the shoulders in her haste, and sped her flying for her hat.

"Run, my child. Tell the factor this telegram is urgent and must go at once"; then she turned her radiant face toward Sabine. For upon the blue telegram slip she had written a single word in cipher: "Come."

Book Four

Mr. Townsend Sits in on the Game

CHAPTER I

A CHANGE OF VENUE

IT was glaring, relentless summer in the city of Tunis. The town lay swooning under a vertical sun set high in a cloudless, turquoise sky. The heat of its walls enclosed the African city in a white circle of fire and hung in waves above the baked roofs, like a smoke of holocaust. Lying thus in its welter of sun, exhaling its thousand reeks of acrid and exasperating odors, yielding to its reiterative days of blinding glister and nights of hallucinating sensualism, the ancient city of Baal and Tanit seemed to exude again something of its lost Phœnician glory, the frenetic ardor of its cult of Aphrodite, its demonolatry of Moloch and the Stars.

In the Arab quarter, under the fig tree of the little café over by the Dar-el-Bey, strips of white matting are spread that shine like square pools of water in the splotchy green shade. The modest

locale is a half-profane, half-mystic retreat for its grave and venerable *habitués*. And foregathered there at all times may be a dozen of them, sitting on their stockinged heels in a silence that seems almost coma. They wear emir vesture of sky and sea and sunset hues, and *babouches*—neatly paired on the ground beside each one—so yellow and shining that one might believe them to be varnished with the extract of light itself. The potted basil and mint of winter time are gone. And, in their stead, each biblic personage wears, stuck between his ear and the white gauze of his summer turban, a long spray of mimosa which hangs against his dark cheek like a dangling tuft of sunlight. They no longer take coffee. Instead, it is chilled water, sweetened and perfumed, which they slowly sip from slender Etruscan glasses. And after each mouthful, longly savored, they lift their eyes to the near-by minaret, in mute benediction of Allah for His gifts. The almond vendor at the corner fairly blisters in the sun; and the weeping pepper tree transpires great resinous drops which fill the air with a pungent aroma. Beggars assiduously and circumspectly—for your Arab is a great prude—hunt for fleas. They are careful not to kill the interesting find, but maternally de-

posit them on the roadside, so that they too, the little creatures, may have their share of what Allah provides for all. At regular intervals, the profane clang of the trolley car coming from Marsa thrusts its discord into the scriptural scene. The cars disgorge a motley collection of native field laborers and Hebrew *marcanti*; French employees and Italian market women; great Nubian dock hands and dainty veiled *qah'bas*. Toward these last even the patriarchial stoics under the fig tree, in a moment of distraction, throw a resigned glance as who should say: "Our day is past." But the gifts of Allah are multiple. And they turn to their Etruscan goblets of chilled and perfumed water.

The little Moslem *qah'bas* are good to look at. They are mere profiles of femininity in their transparent summer *sifsaris* which glimpse splotches of the orange or mauve or rose *fouta* beneath and the undulant line of the lithe body as they walk. Through the eye slit of the black crape band, which molds the face like a mask, shine wonderful eyes. Eyes enlarged by a circle of *kohl* and brought together by another heavy black line which unites the eyebrows. Eyes so fixed and brilliant that they might be of enamel, like those of the Carthaginian idols. But behind this graven fixity there

gleams an avid humanity, an intense carnality, appealing and persistent, and so secretly perverse and provocative that the haunting memory of it remains as one of the indelible impressions of the Orient. Knotted about the right hand, each wears a small handkerchief. It is the insignia of their calling, their badge of recognition by the authorities, and secures them the right to circulate freely, plying their trade in the open and without interference from the Koranic police. In a land where all women are swathed into a uniform ambiguity, there is something to be said, no doubt, in favor of the tiny symbolic handkerchief which thus, so ingenuously and honestly, advertises the moral status of its wearer.

Townsend's blue eyes contracted under crumpled lids in the effort to push back the glare and ache of light as he stepped from the incoming trolley and crossed into the Avenue de la Marine. The broad, sun-swept thoroughfare was deserted, a street of the dead. An effect which was heightened by the motionless huddles of sleeping Arabs strewn about wherever a scrap of shade was available, within yawning doorways and under the scant shelter of the twin rows of eucalyptus that centered the Avenue.

The young man's quick stride clashed with the universal lethargy, obviously defied consequences, as well, in its reckless expenditure of energy. For, a few blocks further in the metallic brazier of the heat, and the sluices of his being broke forth into trickling protest. Fairly sprinting over the remaining distance, he rounded under the gaping archway of the Hôtel de France and into the arms of a uniformed Arab who stood at attention within the gloom.

"Hello, there!" exclaimed Townsend, careening to an abrupt halt. A moment, he sponged his dissolving features, fanning himself vigorously, meanwhile, with his Panama hat. Imperturbable, the tall Arab saluted militarily. "Good work, Gualbi," approved Townsend recognizing him and pleased to find his new man thus manifestly 'on the job'. This promised an advance even on the near-perfection of the reluctantly relinquished Hendricks, who, even now, had been protestingly shipped on the steamer back to Marseilles by his master in person.

"You're not a little bit of good to me here, Hendricks," Townsend had urged in pronouncing this fiat. "Your tonsorial and sartorial and other valet-orial arts are utterly wasted. And your

French raises a riot every time you're obliged to give the natives a sample. I don't need you here and I do need you elsewhere. One thing, I want you to take the machine back from Marseilles to Paris and put it with the garage people there. And then, after a visit with your people down in Derbyshire, I'd be glad if you'd stay by the shooting-box when it's rented. It'll likely be Sir James again and the old crowd, and I know he'd be glad to take you on. See?"

"Very well, sir." Hendricks was secretly overjoyed by the prospect of a breath of ancestral fog; for his brief, British passion for the Orient might be said, literally, to have burnt itself out. A worthy national, as well as professional, dignity, however, had kept him from manifesting other than a funereal acquiescence, albeit he was genuinely, if stonily, attached to Townsend. And the latter, with this last lien that held him to the old order thus momentarily severed, now prepared to give himself to the new with all of his wonted thoroughness.

He turned into the obscurity of the hall and up the tiled stairs three at a time.

"I'll have a bath and fresh clothes, Gualbi," he flung back, from increasing altitudes.

Townsend's French was excellent, so far as it went. And Gualbi's—he had held the grade of sergeant in the Algerian Turcos and had looked the Prussians in the eyes at Bezières—Gualbi's French was picturesquely and amazingly perfect—of its kind.

He composedly followed his new master, throwing a single comprehensive guttural over his shoulder to a swarthy hotel boy who forthwith flicked into nothingness, so far as the order of his going was apparent. While, by occult processes that seem attainable only in Oriental service, a cold bath presently lay prepared in Townsend's dressing room; the barefooted pad of the boy departed, giving place to Gualbi's self-respecting, red-morocco-military-booted tread as he came and went, disposing of his master's belongings according to his own artistic inspiration.

Townsend watched him appreciatively out of the tail of his eye. Picturesque he certainly was, composing in his proper color-scheme an entire palette of local pigment. His other qualities remained to be proven. But there must be vast defection to counter-weigh the amazing æsthetic satisfaction his master at present experienced in the acquisition of this unique valet. Townsend felt as might

indeed a 'three-tailed Basha' in this acceptance of service from such a body-guard, gentleman of the bedchamber, keeper of the privy purse and general holder of the leading-strings to one Timothy Grist Townsend, late self-reliant citizen of the free, sovereign, and United States of America, now reduced, in an alien land, to the rôle of mere wage payer and docile *roi fainéant* to this administrative Mayor of the Palace.

"You must know France pretty well, Gualbi," tentatively puts the do-nothing king to his incalculable henchman whilst peeling his soaked linens.

"Yes, *mossieu*." A wide grin momentarily flattens the mayor's copious lips. With the constellated cotton handkerchief which he wears—with evident reference to the dignity of his new office—ornately dangling by one corner from his waist sash, he gives a passing polish to the shoes in his hand before setting them in orderly readiness.

"You were with the Turco regiments that fought with the French in 1870, weren't you?"

"Yes, *mossieu*."

"I've heard wild tales of those fellows," pursues Timmy. "How many pairs of Prussian ears did *you* bring back with you to Algiers?"

"Enough, *mossieu*." There is a furtive gleam

in the beady black eyes, and Timmy seems to hear a far-off roar from beyond yellow Lybian wastes.

"The Prussians were pretty bad, I dare say," speculates Timmy by way of extenuation and thinking of the ears.

A flashing gleam of teeth through the man's dark beard and "We found the Prussians good, *mossieu*," he said, enigmatically. Whereat Timmy stared. But Gualbi was quietly fitting links to the shirt cuffs.

"There was fearful famine, I remember, at the blockade of Bezières," resumes Townsend, reminiscent of his history and rather as if he had assisted in person at that famous war incident.

"Yes, *mossieu*. . . . And plenty of the enemy killed fresh every day."

The Algerian's back was turned and he missed the look his startled interlocutor threw him. But it is doubtful if he should have appreciated to the full its quality.

Townsend was literally afraid to follow up this lead. And presently, "That's all now, Gualbi," he felt safe in saying; "You may go."

"Gad!" he mused, when the door closed. "If I've not picked up a self-acting thriller this time. Feels as if I'd annexed a strip of the Congo jungle

to my personal belongings. . . . The old ruffian!" indignantly. . . . "Well, after all, that's history," his ready optimism thus reasserting itself under the brace of the cold bath. But his estimate of his new retainer underwent a modification.

A few hours later and Tunis began to breathe again. The slanting sun still blazed in undiminished fury when Townsend came out into the street. But a light sea breeze was lifting up from the bay through the canal which brings air and salubrity to the once pest-ridden city. With it, movement returned to the streets. Soon, the jangle of sounds rose to the shrill crescendo of the evening hour.

Townsend let himself drift with the shifting crowd, keenly sensing the hybrid pageant of which he, now, made part. Innumerable cafés lined the streets, everywhere overflowing their surplus life and chatter onto the adjacent pavements.

He found a table at the Grand Café de Tunis amid a surge of scarlet and sky-blue French uniforms, light gowns and shiny picture-hats. Here, indeed, he felt wonderfully at home. On all sides were the ready Latin laugh with its accompaniment of clashing teeth through dark beard, the

light-hearted abandon and good-fellowship in their pleasure that make the Gallic people the gayest in the world. Trilling little wisps of banter floated through rouged lips. Flashing glances from disquieting eyes, lavishly *kohled*—the sun's glare being obvious reason sufficient for its use by European woman—crossed and met and lingered. Heavy scents of patchouli and perfumed tobacco, the thin tinkle of ice in opaline and ruby glasses, the sob of violins from somewhere within. It was Paris, an exile replica of the distant, adored *patrie* that your Frenchman carries ever in his pocket, a cherished icon, to be brought forth and set up for worship wherever he may be. But a replica out of drawing and overcolored, an exotic crudity. Perhaps it was the added violence of contrast with the majestic past, with the twilight of its vanished age of demi-gods, that gave to this modern capital of old Ifrikia the cheapened air of a make-over. "But that," Townsend reflected, as he sat watching, his absinthe before him, "that's the thankless part of all effort to *accommoder les restes*; next day's minced turkey in ramekins compared to the lordly turkey-bird on the Thanksgiving platter; what?"

There were no native women about at this hour. But bands of pretty, painted Jewesses flapped by

in loose-heeled satin slippers. Townsend found them undeniably handsome, after the crude, redundant manner of the East, with conscious sloe-black eyes—startlingly exaggerated by the thick rim of *kohl*—and dazzling teeth through bursting purple lips. From the high point of their head-dress fell an enveloping cascade of soft white silk drapery that reached to the knee and was held closely at the waist between henna-stained be-ringed fingers. They never by any chance let go; but it concealed nothing of the shapeless legs swathed in many rheumatic-looking wrappings of embroidery. With these beauties came invariably the attendant body-guard of mountainous, wobbling matrons; or brothers and sweethearts garbed, these, with the cheerful opportunism of their race. Sagging gray linen bloomers to the knee, extraordinarily provided with material in the 'sag,' European coat, collar and neck-tie, wine-colored fez with dangling tassel worn well on the nape of the neck, bare calves with clasp-garters holding up white cotton socks and pointed, patent French buttoned boots; making, Townsend decided, a heterogeneous altogether it would be hard to beat. Young Arab bloods, too, lounged by, lithe as panthers, high bred, brilliantly grace-

ful in mauve and canary and Nile-green *gandouras*; and always the rakish flower tucked under the turban. They carry bamboo walking sticks. They talk little, and nothing escapes them. They have many acquaintances at the tables and return salutations in easy, perfect French. For they have been through the Lycée in Tunis or Paris and have taken their degree in science or law or medicine.

And as it gets later, an occasional victoria finds place amid the automobiles and natty turnouts. In them are native women of rank going back to their villas, near Marsa in the cool of the evening. Their beautiful, long, dark eyes burn through the slit of their black face veil.

The slit is shaped like the slender curve of a crescent moon in the mystery of a Tunisian night, thinks Townsend, growing poetical.



CHAPTER II

EVASION

"*BON soir*, Colonel. Glad to see you."

"*Tiens*, that you, Chertier? How goes it?"

The two men shook hands and the Colonel made room at his table for the newcomer. He was evidently an *habitué*, for the garçon at once brought a bottle of Pernod saying "*Bon soir, monsieur*" as he set glass and carafe and absinthe-dripper before him. He was a short and stocky and pompous man in cool-looking, well-cut gray business clothes and a bright blue tie that went well with his florid coloring and keen blue eyes. These bored the crowd with little gimlet glances from under bushy gray eyebrows.

Townsend at once recognized him for the French banker who was also the American consul—for the reason, perhaps, that he had an American wife, the triviality of not being, himself, an American citizen being, evidently, beside the mark. Town-

send knew it was a matter of a few seconds only until his ferret eyes should dig himself out of the crowd.

"It's—ah! so it is. This is a surprise. Howdy-do, Mr. Townsend." With a gesture of apology, he left his table and squeezed his way over to Timmy, with outstretched hand. "I didn't know you were in town."

"I'm only here a day—just stopping over the boat," lied Townsend, engagingly. It formed no part of his present plans to be tagged by the consular urbanities.

"Ah! going down to your friends in Bemblah again, no doubt? Charming people. Wonderful man that, de Madrillos. Don't know another quite like him. Lot of influence at the Residence. Extraordinary influence with the native element, too. But true as gold to France. . . . Won't you join us? Here, garçon. Bring monsieur's glass over to the other table."

But Townsend excused himself, pointing to his glass where remained only the tail feathers, so to speak, of his consumed *perroquet*. The truth is, he was not anxious to make the acquaintance of officialdom in the capital, nor over-desirous of being drawn into the gay coterie of Madame the

Consul and her pretty daughters. He had other views.

"Thank you, but I'm dining at my hotel with some acquaintances *de route*."

"Too bad. . . . Then later, perhaps? Madame Chertier has some friends, I believe. Oh! quite informal."

"Unfortunately, my evening is already disposed of. Otherwise, I should, of course, do myself the pleasure of presenting my respects to Madame Chertier. Please to make her my excuses. You see, I'm off by the morning boat. Good-bye. Glad to have seen you again." And having shaken hands cordially and duly lifted his hat to the Colonel, Townsend threaded his way amid the tables and assortment of French scents and sirens to the street.

This chance meeting with the banker made him realize the need to carry out his little project quickly, if he hoped to carry it out at all.

He had undertaken this, his second visit to Tunisia, with the definite intention of trying out a scheme which he had been at some pains to mature. The year before, he had succeeded, not without difficulty, in shaking the joyous company that had yachted him into Mediterranean waters, and had

managed to go on alone to Bemblah, the Mecca of his secret longing. For, of course, since Sabine's defection, he had felt that all remaining to him of life's romance lay centered in that little African coast town.

Here, his unexampled opportunity for seeing Eastern life at close range, instead of through the tourist binoculars; the moon of delight he spent in Sabine's society and entourage, had satisfied him that hers was no narrow or banal existence. Was one, even, abounding in much which stood for real emancipation in life and ideas. Moreover, that she, herself, stood by her choice and was unfeignedly interested and happy in it. The individual qualities which could create for her and Antoninus—these two urbans in the grain—a home such as he found here, as well as the life itself, first surprised, then captivated him. He, himself, possessed enthusiasm and imagination. He had learned he could reckon with both and used them as the buoy they certainly had proven amid the recurrent waters of his commonplace. But here, in the Levant, he found no commonplace. Scant comfort there might be, according to our inbred notions of such vital matters as tailor and modiste, diversion, sport, and the intellectual stimulus of

club life. Opportunities for a free cultivation of the collective *neuros* were here frankly wanting. Instead, a radical simplifying of the daily social tyrannies left large breathing room for the emotions, for that most enthralling of all pursuits, the pursuit of the ideal. Other countries give you ideas. Here you get sensations. Townsend gave himself over to the satisfaction of his discovery, that the mere leader of a material or even intellectual existence has no conception of what the purely emotional life offers. It is the intensest life; for your emotional adept dies young, he reflected and thinking of Rachel, burnt out by the exquisite sensorial fires more surely than by hard living.

Of course, under his national practicalness and its inbred shame of more than the merest nodding acquaintance with what we may term the finer sensibilities, Townsend felt within himself intervals of a quickening of emotional potentialities. Else should he not have come mooning to this lotus land in search of miraculous dews upon his Golden Fleece. Never, he felt, in the story of the race have we, in very fact, so nearly trod the heights, so ruthlessly touched to the mystery and vastness of the ideal and occult as to-day. And never have we been more unrealizing of our altitudes. Every

day we knock imperiously at the door of what, in an earlier age, were the immeasurable and hidden cosmic forces that walked alone with Deity. Daily we drag them forth in bondage to turn our chariot wheels and answer to our office call, carry our messages, and do the household chores. And the splendor and miracle of—say electricity—call from our *blasé* souls no imaginative outburst of poesy, no tremor of emotive response. Can we picture the inspiration of a Homer, of Isaias or Job before the thrill of our daily realities?

Townsend gathered his dew and folded his Fleece at Bemblah, and felt that life as the Occident understands it, was decidedly too *terre-à-terre*. He wanted to get closer to something he was missing out of it, something towards the gaining of which Sabine had won the start of him. That which fed her psychic growth and enriched her experience should, he vowed, also feed and enrich his.

It was curious that Sabine's marriage, instead of making place for a new occupant in his affections, had seemed to eliminate altogether the serious feminine claim upon his life. He attracted women. Consequently, when he deliberately entered the sphere of their influence, he found them



amiable, accessible, in form in a word; highly agreeable as accessories before—and after—the fact. The fact itself became more and more perfunctory and the *sex sequior* dropped to decidedly second plan in his scheme of living. With him, women were still, socially, the *hors d'œuvre* that heightens the repast. Or, to change to a less material trope, they remained the prelude and finale that worthily completed the *leitmotiv* of the tremendous opus. But the trouble was that the tremendousness of the work itself was diminishing to the point of unimportance. He had never quite succeeded in taking himself seriously. He did not feel himself to be at all paramount, nor his little destinies the corner-stone of the universal structure. And this detached view of his individual brief span was gradually attacking his attitude toward life with the dry-rot of *m'en ficheism*—a state of mind which is difficult to find in English, either in fact or appellation, but which may be approximated in the term 'don't-give-a-hangism'.

It was out of this growing indifferentism that his epoch-marking visit to Bemblah a year ago had, happily, lifted him. He returned to America showing a bronzed face in his old haunts and a sovereign contempt for all things foreign, since

"Little old New York's good enough for me" was the shibboleth that brought forth the answering smile of good fellowship at the clubs. However, he casually gave out his intention of a longer tour in the far East, proceeded to put his affairs and belongings in order, and within the year was again in Tunis. This time not even his friends in Bemblah knew of his presence. His bankers in Paris had instructions for the present to forward French bank notes each quarter by registered mail to the *Poste Restante* at Tunis which, on the former occasion, had viséd his passport and credentials through the Consulate. His hope was to drop from the tourist world, where he must have necessarily remained a marked figure, and lose himself in the population and alluring possibilities of the Tunisian capital.

Returning to the Hôtel de France, he dined well and harmoniously to the strains of *The Chocolate Soldier* played by a first-rate French orchestra, amid a random company of brilliantly habited men and women, with irreproachable service and excellent menu.

Glancing about him, he recalled Monsieur Chertier's former summing up of the attractions of the city. "We have the official balls and receptions at the Residence, our yearly Charity Ball and Ba-

zaar, an Italian Opera, tennis, some quite charming society women—with, ahem! ladies of less importance, evidently, but not perhaps of less charm—half world, even quarter world. An appreciable resource, cher Monsieur, during the ennui of the summer months when the *whole* world goes back to France for the waters.”

“And the native women?” Townsend had queried.

Chertier stared, “Ah! yes . . . evidently. They form a picturesque note, undoubtedly, but—ahem!—rather apart from the social life of the Colony. They hardly adventure into the French part of the City.”

“Of course. But you, the Europeans. Don’t you ever go into the Arab quarter?” It was the only quarter worth a fillip to Townsend.

Chertier had shrugged his shoulders. “My dear fellow,” he disclaimed. “None of us are here for the love of it. Tunis is a stepping stone in the official world and a last straw to the broken Frenchmen who turn colonists. No sane man leaves France willingly. It does seem odd, but most of us are absolutely ignorant of the Mussulman side of the town.” And, at the time, an immense discouragement had laid hold of Townsend. It didn’t seem quite worth the trip to old Ifrikia for the

mad distraction of an aperitif at a French café with the usual mob of boulevardiers. He smiled now, and with no discouragement. There were other things, he knew. And he deemed them eminently worth while.

Soon, he was in the night again.

Lighting a cigar, he strolled down the Avenue de la Marine under the blue of arc-lights, past high apartment houses and swiftly spinning motor cars and clanging trolleys overflowing with showy toilettes. And on into another avenue equally broad and high and animated. It was evident he was not abandoning himself to the guidance of hazard as succeeding streets fell behind him. He came, at length, to a brilliant restaurant at the corner of the rues Asdrubal and Hamilcar. He smiled, as he read the heroic Carthaginian names and noted the garish modern *brasserie* they sponsored. Ahead, and facing him, was what he sought, a grim Sarrazin archway, gray and sinister and forbidding, the re-christened Porte de France that terminates the avenue of that name and gives access to the Arabic quarter of Tunis.

He turned under it and, with a huge recklessness, plunged into the broken, badly lighted, crazy streets—alleys rather—that lay beyond.

CHAPTER III

A MESSENGER FROM THE SOUTH

THROUGH the dangling door of one of the low-browed cafés came the throaty strains of a Neapolitan doggerel to the pinching of a guitar. Bursts of boisterous laughter rent the silence as Townsend passed, and coarse oaths in the idioms of every Mediterranean seaboard. Puffs of composite odors assailed his nostrils sickeningly—rancid oil, fish brine and Gorgonzola and musk and gutter-run. Above him in the half-light, from bulging Moorish windows, frowsy heads bent forward, garlanded by festoons of garlic and drying linen.

He hurried on through this unsavory vestibule to what, he knew, must lie beyond, turning from left to right and back again as fancy moved. And soon noise and ribaldry and stench were behind. Overhead, the walls of the narrow streets at times met in vaulted arches. About him were silence,

mystery, and the shadows. Dull, unwashed lanterns, hanging at intervals, shed about them a fitful radius of anæmic light. He stopped before a Carthaginian column set in the blank wall that turned its back to the intruder with inscrutable disdain. And once he came upon a crumbling capital, carved with the symbolism of Baal and set up now for a beggar's seat in an angle. Here and there were massive low doors wonderfully clouded and topped by black and white marble cinters. Toppling moucharabys hung like latticed bird-cages over him and, occasionally, spectral branches reaching above the wall-line showed where concealed gardens lay, while the smell of lemon and capsicum stole into the air. A pair of silent, white figures passed furtively. A phantom *bernous* brushed by him. From somewhere, high up, a shaft of light filtered through a trellised window where bent a solitary turbaned, bearded head, Rembrandt-like against a background of shadows.

He kept on and the houses became humbler, the neighborhood, poorer. On the housetops, which were lower, dark forms moved about and lurid patches of light told where people were at work in narrow courts beneath. He caught the padded

beat of a tom-tom, the shrill of a flute; and, suddenly, the high tremolo cry of revel stabbed the night.

It was not surprising that Townsend felt himself lifted bodily into another age, the so-called age of legend and adventure and high romance. The enigma of this Moslem country fired all the errantry in him. His determination deepened to get behind these walls and learn something of the secrets they enclosed, to find out the trick of existence so jealously guarded from the unbeliever. He had a sporting need to try it out. But more than the lure of the game and a racial instinct for adventure, or even the sort of globe-trotter avidity which had often carried him far afield, was, he knew, an underlying motive. With characteristic self-analysis he admitted what it was. He looked up and blew his cigarette smoke into the face of the stars, as he softly challenged her name. Sabine? . . . And he smiled, a bit pensively, though he would have scorned the qualificative.

He no longer perplexed himself by questioning the nature of his sentiment for her. His visit to Bemblah had convinced him of her happiness and with the whole heart of him he rejoiced at it—

understood it. Instinctive fairness made him recognize Antoninus for all that he was, "worthier than I can ever be," he admitted with generous and genuine humility. But he made up his mind, then and there, that if the Orient was the trump suit with Sabine, he was going to hold some of it himself. If the Haroun-el-Raschid line of cheek and port of beard obtained, he himself should set about acquiring both forthwith, "a good thick coating of Eastern shellac," he put it, without, however, endorsing her taste. And why not? What in the world had he better to do just now than pursue experience in the latitude where she was gaining hers? Experience. He knew that with *bakhchich* and a certain sort of cicerone the possibilities for it were legion. But the exoticism that is gained from promiscuous and commercialized experience formed no part in his desire—or intention.

Upon his reflections, out of the darkness a bernoused figure uprose. So sudden was it and so close to him, that his next step must inevitably have sent them both rolling in the street. The man's appearance was so weirdly unexpected there, where he had thought himself alone, that Townsend gave a startled leap backward. It was as if the

earth had yawned beneath his feet and belched forth a hooded specter.

"*Cré nom!* Who the devil are you?" burst from him sharply in the first moment of his surprise. Recovering himself at once, he stood quietly alert for what might follow, and looked the fellow in the eye.

The Arab, however, gave no evidence of hostility. On the contrary, his hand went up and out with a peculiar little movement of greeting, whose purport Townsend failed to catch. The man hesitated at this.

"You are he whom we expect?" he asked doubtfully and in labored French, keenly searching Townsend's face.

"That depends whom you're looking for," Timmy returned cheerfully and quite reassured. The man was pacific enough, could speak French, and Townsend was entirely ready to follow up any lead that presented so promisingly. But the other seemed nonplussed.

"We look for guidance from the South," he said, guardedly.

"Dippy, by the lord Harry," mentally commented Timmy. He laid his hand persuasively on the Arab's shoulder.

"Brother," he said, "whichever point of the compass it comes from, it's welcome if you'll just use some of it to guide me back to my starting point. Home, in other words. Which way?" propelling the man gently a few steps along the guttery street.

But this speech, apparently, was more than the man's French was equal to. He caught only the last words and answered them.

"From Bemblah."

Instant attention gripped Townsend.

"Is the one you expect a Frenchman—like me?" he asked evenly, but fixing a keen look upon the other.

"He is not a Frenchman—*like you*," was the quick rejoinder; and the man stopped resolutely, having evidently made up his mind. "Your way is to the right, *mossieu*. Good night."

There was a finality about his tone, as well as words, that discouraged further questioning. But Townsend felt he wanted to know more about anything that was connected with Bemblah. Who was it they—some secret Arab conclave, for he understood now the man's sign of brotherhood as they met—were expecting to bring orders from Bemblah? He turned to ask—but the man was gone.



"Well, for suddenness," he commented, as he searched his way, "our friend Mohammed holds the record."

The man, of course, had been told off to meet a person he had never seen, a European evidently, and he was to accost him in French, to provide against the mistake, precisely, which he had made.

Townsend felt pretty sure he had stumbled against some intrigue—political, perhaps. But he lacked utterly the experience and means to follow up the incident hazard had thus thrown in his way, and he soon lost interest in it. Instead, he drifted again into something of the reverie the man's appearance had so brusquely interrupted.

As he threaded his way back to the Porte de France he looked up again at the stars that kept pace with him. He thought they might be houris' eyes that watched him from the Prophet's Seventh Heaven, from behind the yashmak of the sky.

"Stay where you are, Khadidja and Zuleika and Aicha," he smiled up at them, "I want none of *you*. Look after the Prophet."

CHAPTER IV

AN EASTERN BACHELOR ESTABLISHMENT

GUALBI lost no time in finding what Townsend wanted, an Arab house in the rue Tourbet-el-Bey, small, but a gem of its kind.

It was not a difficult task with the ample funds placed in his hands by his Inglesi master—all English-speaking peoples were as one to the undiscerning Arab—a windfall of which he promptly diverted a not inconsiderable amount toward bolstering up his own tottering credit. The former Turco was one also accustomed to authority, or at least to consideration from his kind. The title of Hadj which he bore, either by right of his own journey to the Prophet's tomb or of inheritance from his pilgrim fathers, his status as a war veteran of repute and also his respectable age constituted several and collective claims to respect. He owed it to the household over which he had consented to preside

to start it on an unencumbered and self-respecting basis.

What procedure he employed with the owner of the freehold in the Tourbet-el-Bey deponent sayeth not. But the lease was drawn up before the local *notir* and handed, with the receipt for the first year's payment, for Townsend to sign.

"It will suit *mossieu* in every way," Gualbi affirmed, as Townsend signed. Needless to say, the house had first suited himself to the smallest particular.

Townsend was more than satisfied with it. He was enthusiastic. Within the bare white limestone shell was the delicate chrysalid of a dwelling fit to infold butterfly possibilities of ephemeral happiness.

The main body of the house—for kitchen, kitchen-court, and vestibule were in a wing apart—comprised a quadrangle of four airy chambers inclosing a covered portico of small Moorish arches, round like the horns of the crescent moon, upheld by slender pillars of rose marble, like rows of delicate waxen tapers. Within lay a marvelous Persian rose-garden, the crimson heart of the house.

Townsend thought he had never seen anything more exquisite and complete of its kind. There

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was not a garish or banal or perfunctory detail about the place. A deep border of delicate arabesque in stucco that festooned the walls under the cornice was fine as lacework. The tiling was beautiful and harmonious in mellow tones of turquoise or amber or green. Verses from the Koran were lettered in distemper under the stucco line. "I direct my face unto Him who has created," was in the room facing the East. Gualbi, well pleased at his Roumi master's interest in things Koranic, translated for him. Above the stairway to the housetop was: "Thus facing the stars, I go out among them to meet the Light."

Townsend ran up lightly, noting the artistry of the gilt wrought baluster and, pushing a door, found himself on a tiled terrace amid a white sea of flat housetops. At one end, overlooking the bay, was a tiny belvedere in stucco, with seats, and topped by a dome tiled in green, the whole a sort of fairy dovecote, the most harmonious and delicate creation of Moorish workmanship imaginable. Flowers a-plenty grew in great glazed jars,—a giant heliotrope like a lilac bush, and aromatic plants, nard and hyssop and wild thyme and balsamine. While further on, down a broad step, the clear water in a blue tiled bathing-pool gave

back the sky transmuted into somber sapphire. And all about, surge above surge, lay the real Tunis, city of Tanit yesterday, Islâmic city of to-day, its cupolas and minarets reaching up from the mists of the sea as from the mists of the past. And over it all, a serenity like the peace of Allâh.

Townsend leaned on the baluster of the dove-cote and took in the charm of the old town. Something in its undisturbed archaism, in the tranquil pride of its stately desuetude and squalor put a mere modern out of countenance—made him feel the disconcerting limitations of youth and haste and the vulgarity of progress.

He lighted a cigarette. With the strike of the match a vaudeville air burst from his lips.

"The effrontery of it!" he ejaculated, checking the rag tune severely. "So much for the low associations of an unclassic youth. I s'pose I've got to take to a hubble-bubble. Which, at least, should preserve my mentals from the outrage of the rag."

He took a few last draws before spinning the cigarette from him, with sudden thirst for sacrifice.

"*Vade retro*," he quoted. "And, on second thought, you too," sending the package of gold-tipped Al Raschids after it. "Henceforth a

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hookah for mine. Beard of the Prophet, there it is again," he groaned despairingly. "Decidedly, it'll need rehearsal before I can dress the part."

His wandering gaze here rested in some surprise upon a newcomer who, emerging into his line of vision from the stairway, was in time to catch the windfall of scattering cigarettes. A masterly swoop and neat confiscation to the fastness of an ample linen *seroual*, then a handsome, serene face was lifted to Townsend and, advancing a step, its owner said quietly:

"*Pf'our.*"

"Meaning what, now, I wonder," pondered Townsend. He looked meditatively at the lad, who returned his gaze unblinkingly. He might be fifteen, was tall and well-built, the color of an Italian, and extraordinarily smart-looking in his immaculate white linens. His crimson *chechia* had not been a half-hour from the *souk*, nor, also, his yellow *babouches*.

Townsend looked him over with acute interest.

"And who are you?" he asked pleasantly.

But the boy shook his head. "*Ma-naraf-ch français, ya sidi. Ana Hafid* [I don't know French, sir. I'm Hafid]," And again he repeated "*Pf'our.*"

Townsend felt for the Arabic pocket-dictionary he had duly invested in upon his arrival. Not finding it, he continued looking at Hafid while he revolved the word carefully in his mind.

"Meaning, no doubt, tiffin," he concluded after a minute, "otherwise *déjeuner*, alias lunch. I'm sure, a finished polyglot. What's more, the thing itself comes mighty pat in any tongue." Acting upon which timely inspiration he went down, Hafid waiting for him to pass. The boy, evidently, was an annexation of Gualbi's.

"What do you mean by taking on a boy who can't understand a word I say to him—and, reciprocally?" he asked of Gualbi, who stood beside the table directing the new boy by an eagle glance and a grunted monosyllable, as he brought in the dishes. The former Turco took them from the boy and himself ceremoniously served Townsend. He now held the dish while Townsend helped himself, and handed it back to Hafid before replying. It was to be strict ceremonial from the start.

"He's a nice boy, *mossieu*. He's intelligent and honest. And because he knows only *elarbiya*, that will help you to learn it."

"That's very kind of you, I'm sure," said his

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much administered master, busy with the broiled tuna fish and its garnishment of fried peppers.

"If you like, I can speak to Amor Ben Garrou to have him come to give you some lessons. Perhaps he will consent." Gualbi did not deem it essential to say that he had already secured the valuable services of Ben Garrou whose consent was immediate at mention of the stipend attached.

"And who is the individual?" questioned Townsend, wiping his eyes, which were duly paying their watery tribute to the peppers.

"He is a student at the Grand Mosque, and very learned, the most learned *Kateb* there. He speaks some French, too."

"Very well," said Townsend readily. It would be an improvement on the pocket-dictionary, which was never, by any chance, in his pocket at the crucial moment. Moreover, strange to say, the novel sensation of being so sedulously taken care of by his capable henchman pleased him. Gualbi gave to him the patronizing obedience and maternal loyalty he had given his young lieutenant. He had a protecting eye for his interest, even his indulgences, convinced that he, Gualbi, knew better than he did himself what was good for him. He liked the energetic young Inglesi who could



cap his order on occasion with a good round oath, of which, to tell the truth, Townsend was rather free in French. It never seemed like breaking a commandment either of the Decalogue or of good breeding to swear *by blue* or *name of a dog* or *sacred morning* and his consequent indulgence along these lines was inspiriting, to say the least. Under his easy good nature and eagerness to be coached along every line, Gualbi soon recognized in him an inflexible habit of having his own way swiftly and without waste of words. And the old man liked that. He believed in the perquisites of master-ship and had all the Orientals' inherent pride of service with a master who kept to the holy traditions and even used the *matraque* to emphasize authority. But this, of course, would never do from a *Roumi*.

One indeed he knew, his preceding *seyyed*. But *he* was a believer at heart, a pearl of men. Had Gualbi not seen him order the bastinado to one of his house boys for brutalizing his little brother, and the father had come in the evening to thank the Arfi for this true care for his children? And the *fellah*, drunk with *boukha*, who covered him with his gun and tracked him for an hour, while the Arfi had only his walking stick? The *Com-*

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missaire arrested the man and sent him to Susa to prison. But the Arfi refused to lodge complaint and the French authorities had to let him go. And then the Arfi came before the Khaïd and had the man given ten strokes of the *matraque*, to teach him not to get drunk again. Yes; there was a man. The old soldier had blindly worshiped him, as one worthy to lead. Well, we all have our weaknesses, even this pearl of men. He went away to fetch back a wife, a woman of his own land—which was natural enough. But he, Gualbi, had left. He didn't descend to the service of *Roumiyas*. They who sit at table with their husbands! Well, it was an insane, jealous fit on his part and it was past. He should think no more about it. A man is always a fool once in his lifetime. But he doesn't need to wait to be an *old* fool. Then the lesson is useless, for he has no chance to profit by his learning.

So Gualbi set about training Hafid according to his ideas, insisting on military deference, promptness, and *tenue*. A good *khedim* does not wait to be told what to do nor what is wanted. He anticipates. His brains are paid for as well as his hands and feet, which are all hired to spare the master's. He was to remember, too, that the

sah'eb had difficulty with the Arab speech. And he was to wash his face and hands and feet every-day and not wait for the weekly *hammam*. Moreover, he should wear his new clothes every day.

"But I shall wear them out," protested the thrifty Hafid.

"There will be others," said Gualbi. "This is a *sah'eb's* house."

Thus Gualbi licked the new boy into shape. Sternly, an occasional cuff, or clout on the ear, always about the head 'which is the part at fault, and not a kick elsewhere as is the free way of the *Roumis*, who seem to think the seat of a boy's intelligence lies there.' But not unkindly on the whole. And the boy had never been happier; amid an opulence too, that belonged only to princely establishments. And if Townsend learned a little of the vernacular from the silent boy, in return, his sharp ears picked up with amazing quickness every scrap of French that fell from the other's lips.

When Amor Ben Garrou came, Townsend was pleased at the diversion and glad that Gualbi had thought of him.

The student of the *Djama Kbir* was a grave and austere-looking young man with circumspect eyes

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and nervous manner. He came slithering across the marble tiles with a mincing step, fingering his rosary and not seeming particularly at ease in this abode of unbelief. He wore a green turban, for he was of maraboutic family, and a white linen *djebba*, and the haughty courtesy of his salaam was rather impressive. He declined both coffee and flavored water, and Townsend vaguely wondered what Gualbi had been thinking about when he captured a fanatic of this sort.

However, the lesson got on famously, the descendant of the saintly marabout thawing perceptibly as, possibly, he had time to look about him and found nothing to outrage Islâm. He spoke the precise French of the schools, whereas Townsend's smacked decidedly of the boulevards.

When he left, Townsend had added thirty words to his vocabulary. So that by the end of the week he had really made considerable progress. He had opportunity a-plenty to try his Arabic 'on the dog' in the persons of Gualbi and Hafid, each eager to help the tyro; and it was encouraging to gradually see their brightening look of intelligence as he delivered himself of some cabalistic mouthful. He sent the boy for all sorts of things he did not want, or that he



mistook for other things, for the recurring satisfaction of making himself understood. It was like playing a game.

That is how they came by their peacock—*taous*. At the order, Hafid started off unhesitatingly, while Townsend presently began to wonder why on earth it took so long to fetch the framed photograph—*tacoura*—he had asked for from his dressing-room. After ten minutes the boy came back, breathless but triumphant, with the peacock, to Townsend's stupefaction and the boy's everlasting credit for resourcefulness.

It was natural that Ben Garrou should be highly gratified by his pupil's progress, flattered, too, by his evident desire to learn about the true faith and its customs and holy traditions. And, freed from his first mistrust and aloofness, it was not long before the two men became, if not friends, at least on terms of friendly intercourse.

CHAPTER V

PERFUMES AND PURSUIT

FROM the *Souk-el-Attarine*—the Market of Perfumes—came the penetrating odors of myrrh and aromates, all the distilled essences from the flower gardens of Nabeul and the shores of Araby. From one of the booths, even, there wafted the less classic patchouli of Montmarte mixed with the familiar blends of Lentheric and Houbigant.

"Good morning, Si Salem," greeted Townsend, cheerfully, as he passed, looking into one of the niche-like shops. Salem ben Ali Djebeli, the perfume dealer, sitting cross-legged on the floor in the very middle of his establishment—which was the size of the ordinary apartment lift—raised his head from his scales and saluted gravely. Townsend was one of his cherished buyers.

Two daughters of Islâm stood in the brief premises. They were buying *kohl* and cosmetics

and musk which Si Salem weighed out with a long, parchment-hued, parsimonious hand. They gave Townsend the usual impression of enfolded pupæ, mere ambulant anonyms, so far as the uninitiated might judge. He suddenly remembered that he wanted one more bottle of essence to make up the half-dozen already on his shaving-stand, and turned in on the available half-foot of Djebeli's step.

Waiting, he stole several looks at the veiled figures who fascinated him, as usual. It was their mystery, their remoteness, their possibilities, he explained to himself. "Yes, the remoteness of all possibilities," he laughed, philosophically checking his rising interest in the high-born dames. He was sure they were high-born. The women of the *fel-lahîn* could not afford to buy in the *Souk-el-Attarine*.

One, the taller—Townsend felt she was also the prettier—asked for jasmine.

"Ah! yes, jasmine; the favorite scent of the peerless *beyas* and the ladies of the royal harem. Here it is"; and Si Salem drew toward him a vial flagreed with Arabic inscriptions, "the finest to be had, and grown—I can vouch for it—in the gardens of Nabeul." He tilted his bottle and drew the glass stopper. "Just try it, *ya Lalla*."

She stretched forth the back of her hand that tapered to slender fingers tipped with nails like burnished pomegranate petals—"as dimpled and shapely as they come" was the inward comment of the observant *masculus*—and the old *souki* touched the stopper to the warm flesh. She savored it with a hundred little airs and graces, commenting in the softest of purring voices, like any great lady of the *faubourg*. "Delicious, exquisite! *Choum* [smell]."

She lifted her hand to her companion's face—and her eyes, suddenly, full to Townsend's. He caught the flash of their challenge squarely in the bull's-eye, so to speak, of his susceptibility. And for a long instant their looks touched, hers insistent, fathomless, above the baffling black barrier of *crêpe*.

"I will take it," and she turned slowly to Si Salem, waited while he measured out the scent, took the package which her companion paid for, and without further notice of Townsend they left, going off through the alternate sun and shade to the rhythmic cling-clang of their silver anklets.

Townsend spoke hurriedly.

"You may put me up a small *flacon*, of that

ambergris, Si Salem—twenty francs worth will do—and Gualbi will come around for it.” And before Djebeli could bow his thanks or utter his benedictions, Townsend had hastened after the two sirens who already seemed like ivory figurantes in the winding coulisses of the *souk*.

Djebeli smiled. “It belongs to his age,” he said, and took a long, compensatory whiff of the ambergris. Are there not three things permitted and excellent in the religion of Islâm? Prayer and perfume and women. All the rest is smoke.

At first, Townsend had some trouble in keeping the object of his pursuit in sight. The crowd that infests the *souk* was like a flock of sheep in a common huddle of white *bernous* and *sifsari*. A dozen times he thought he had lost them as they stopped here and there to finger different wares, wonderful embroidered stuffs and emir mantles taken out of legend and flung down beside cotton velvet boxes covered with pasted cockle-shells, ‘made in Germany.’ At last, however, he fell in behind them and had leisure to feast his eyes on the slender, irritating outlines silhouetted through the traitorous *sifsari*. Under the envelope he could divine the chrysalide. Beneath the fine

ivory drapery showed the rich embroidery of the short bolero, the broad silken stripes of the *fouta* which, molding the hips, revealed the langourous, undulating walk. No detail escaped him, down to the Cinderella, gold-threaded brodekins that hung, by a miracle of grace, to the tiniest of feet. And always the argentine music of the silver anklets, *cling-clang! cling-clang!*

On he followed in their decidedly 'harmonious wake.' From the *Souk-el-Trout* (which Timmy discovered was *not* the fish market) round a corner to the *Souk-en-Nsa* and on to the *Souk-el-Berka*, the old slave market where second-hand jewelry is sold, but where surreptitious holders to a hallowed tradition yet came to traffic in feminine merchandise, concluding the barter with a convenient gift of jewels. Here, bloated old reprobates in venerable turbans occupied the circular benches, their debauched noses fastidiously buried in a spray of jasmine. French brokers and Levantine merchants attentively followed the sales while the Jewish criers carried about, dangling from neck and arms and fingers, the various pieces for inspection. Everywhere flocked the bands of white *sifsaris*, silent, busy. Under the arcades, in somber niches which formerly were

used as slave-pens, aged harpy-headed *hannana* conspired some shameful bargain.

The two women stopped close to a pillar, and Townsend took the opportunity to draw nearer. A crier approached, his wares jangling from every available hanging point of his person and, as he came up, she whom Townsend followed suddenly reached out and took a string of baroque pearls between her fingers. It was her right hand, and for the first time Townsend saw the tiny handkerchief folded about it. He stopped short

. . . There was nothing surprising, surely, in the signal thus displayed. Of course not. But the blossom of his ardor died as if frostnipped. Desire fell from him.

"*Qaddach?* [how much?]" she asked in the sweet purring voice.

"A hundred *douros*," replied the yellow-eyed vendor, and looked at Townsend.

"*Ma andi-che* [I haven't it]" she said, dropping the necklace with a little sigh.

Townsend smiled, amused at the childishness of her manoeuvre; feeling, too, that his disappointment was not, after all, of her making. The little *qah'ba* was openly what she was, honestly fluttering her oriflamme to the eyes of all. It was

for him to use his. Did he really look for *beyas* knocking about the market-place of the city?

The crier insinuated himself before Townsend with an ingratiating smirk.

"I have something here for your lordship. Only look. Something antique and rare—very rare. A *beya's* jewel and fit for a Sultana." He rummaged into the recesses of his leather pouch. Townsend stopped him.

"No crown jewels to-day, my friend. I am just out of Sultanas. Here, these will do."

He selected at random two tinny-looking brooches of beaten gold set with uncut bluish stones, paid the price, and waited till the Jew jangled off. Then he turned to the silent women, holding out the trinkets.

"Thank you for the exercise," he said pleasantly and in his politest English. "I enjoyed the trot."

Each wonderingly took the ornament he held out to her—What eyes they had!—and the little beauty of his pursuit hesitated, faltered. For this strange tongue and manner were quite without the pale of her experience. Then, recovering, in the choicest of Parisian argot, "*Où c'que tu niches, toi?*" she asked point blank.

He started violently. Shades of Tanit! and

every summer shade! Could he believe his ears! Or was he the sport of a disordered fancy to thus hear, under this Punic sky and amid the ruins and evocations of a hallowed antiquity, these words of a *fille* of Paris? The disillusion was complete. But he could not suppress a movement of regret at the brutality of it.

Seeing him smile, she repeated her question impatiently: "Where do you hang out?"

"Where Allah wills, my Vestal," he said gently. "Adieu."

He turned on his heel and—encountered the yellow eyes of Ben Garrou, who was leaning against a pillar in the shade, several yards away. The ascetic face of the student of the *Djama Kbir* was impassable as ever under the bulging green turban. But green is an unbecoming color and the student looked bilious.

Townsend nodded, intending to speak. But with a slight recognition, the man turned and was lost in the crowd.

"The deuce!" said Timmy regretfully. "And I wanted to ask him the Arabic word for *stung*."

CHAPTER VI

VESTURE OF EMIR

DINNER over, Townsend devoted his energies to the duty of keeping in touch with the world by the help of a week-old copy of the New York *Herald*, Paris edition, and the four-page *Dépêche Tunisienne*, the French official organ of the Protectorate. Conscientiously he finished the advertisements which embellish the entire last page of this latter; and it was not without a glow of national pride that he noted the urgent invitation there set forth to try *Sunlight Soap*, with an equally pressing appeal for the merits of *Vegetaline* and the indispensable benefits of *Madame Winslow's Sirop Calmant*. It was gratifying to know how bravely they held up their end of the world in a far, benighted land.

Pride of country is a good thing and it carries far. Its chief exercise, however, is in heroic moments and not for the quiet domestic hour.

Townsend sucked dutifully at his narghileh and then admitted to himself that he was a bit bored. Solitude is a state of the soul not of the body. But just now his soul part, which had hitherto been perfectly companioned in the absorption of his ideal love for Sabine, stepped down to knock at the door of his heart and ask to be let in. Something, suddenly gone hungry, claimed a share, *its* share.

Townsend rose and moved about the place restlessly. Gualbi came in with the *flacon* of jasmine from Djebeli. He set it down, then pottered about—as was his habit when something was on his mind. The old *souki* of the Market of Perfumes and he had evidently had their gossip over their coffee, and Gualbi's solicitude for his young *mah'mi* had been awakened.

Townsend let him fidget around a bit, amused, always, by the way the wily old fellow both proposed and disposed in matters touching his own humble person; and curious, now, to see what was in the wind.

"Well, *mon vieux*, what is it?" he asked, at length.

"Amor Ben Garrou is coming presently. He told me when I met him just now," unloaded the repressed henchman in a breath.

"But, my good Gualbi, I don't want a lesson at this hour," protested Townsend.

"It's not for a lesson. It's—ah!" as the knocker struck faintly from the outer vestibule. "There he is now," And Gualbi disappeared to admit Ben Garrou, while Townsend grinned to see his hand thus forced. But he was glad of any diversion from his increasing boredom.

His preliminary duties as host duly complied with and the guest supplied with narghileh and a debauching glass of perfumed water, Gualbi, from the doorway, took upon himself the rôle of spokesman. He came to the point at once, now that he had brought matters too far for Townsend to back out.

"You need distraction, *mossieu*. It belongs to your years. The gifts of Allah are for His servants, each in its place."

Here the good man seemed to lose his wind, for he turned to the silent *t'aleb* to help him out. "Speak up, Amor Ben Garrou. I am no scholar."

Townsend looked at his respectable major-domo in some astonishment. He was hardly prepared for the lofty style of this adjuration, and he turned wondering eyes on his visitor, thus solemnly appealed to. What on earth was coming?

Ben Garrou cleared his throat. He dropped his eyes hypocritically to the tube of his narghileh.

"*Si Taouncind*," he said, in a thin voice, "in the religion of the Prophet—to him honor and benediction—there are three things permitted and excellent. The first is prayer, the second is the perfume of flowers, and the third is women. And outside of these all else is smoke. So say the law and the Prophet."

Gualbi nodded in admiring approval. It wasn't for an *ancien militaire* to talk like that. Ben Garrou was an *ulema*.

"Bully for the Prophet!" heartily endorsed Townsend *sotto voce*. What he said was: "Praise unto the Prophet, who knows a good thing when he sees it,"—or words *something* to that effect. "Go on, Amor Ben Garrou." And after his pharisaical preamble, Ben Garrou did go on quickly.

"There are dancers in the palace of the Sid' Beji el Bechir who gives a feast to-night for the Scheikh of the Beni Maghzen. Not the *ghawazi* one may see all over the city by paying—*femt-chi*? [you understand?] These are attached to the Beylikal household—as dancers merely. None but *meslemin* will be present, no *Roumis*."

"Well, happening to be a *Roumi*, how do I get

there then? For I conclude that is what you and Gualbi have fixed up between you," questioned Townsend, not unnaturally. He was not at all averse to the idea of getting an inside line on the Beylikal dancing-girls, as he mentally put it.

At this point and for answer, Gualbi, who managed his scenic effects with considerable skill, produced from a parti-colored calico wrapper redolent of nard and pepper-flowers, a full-fledged native suit. Not the thing one may pick up and piece out in the clothes market, for the price. This one had been made by the best native tailor, and ordered a week before by Gualbi, and was all that a man of Townsend's wealth and station should have. Ben Garrou looked on with cold appreciation while Gualbi shook out the different pieces for Townsend's inspection; and there was a wistful look in the old soldier's eye, that immediately brightened as Townsend, about whom there was no pose, came delightedly to his feet.

"Why, they're splendid, Gualbi! Of course I'll put them on—if they'll fit,"—he did not know they were made to his own measures—"and go with Ben Garrou to the Scheikh's dancing-party." It would be like clothing him self in clouds of glory to don such rainbow vesture.

The suit was of azure cashmere fine as silk and braided handsomely in silk of the same tone—a wide hanging trouser, high waistcoat, and short jacket. This was entirely covered, except at the front, by a wonderful emir's *dejebba* of silken opal moiré like mother-of-pearl, gorgeously embroidered with 'lover's tombs' and 'suns,' and showing, where the evening shirt front would be, the azure high-waistcoat beneath bordered with a bell-fringe of silver, and the plastron of blue moiré. There was a regulation turban of white silk shot with gold, and escarpins of varnished leather, citron colored—and two poignards with gem-encrusted hilts to be worn at either side in the loose crimson waist sash.

Carefully did the two men introduce Townsend into these Haroun-el-Raschid habiliments, and it was with infinite satisfaction that the good Gualbi at length surveyed the completed work of his hands. Townsend himself felt he was pretty much of a success as he blinked at his gorgeous reflection in the glass. To begin with, the long lines gave him additional height, the amplitude increased his breadth. He was a very imposing-looking masculine creature indeed, apart from the blue of his cheeks which even the extra close shave had not

wholly effaced. A crimson rose hung above his ear. His sun-burnt hands rested on the flashing hilts of his poignards. And the thought came to him of the poor figure we must cut, we others of Europe, with our skimp, ungraceful apparel, our hideous hats and clashing boots and brusque movements, to the eyes of these lords of Islām vested in the grave state of their ancient tradition.

“And now?” he inquired of Ben Garrou, while he prudently investigated the whereabouts of his new pockets. Involuntarily his movements were slower, his gesture more reserved. A man couldn’t very well take on his usual stride with this wonderful silken thing clinging to his legs, not to mention the lemon foot-gear which, he found, exacted some thought to retain. Ben Garrou put a handful of cigarettes into a jade case and slipped it into the proper pocket, showed him where to keep his money, where his watch, and how to manage the poignards which were not the innocent adjuncts they looked to be; and finally gave him an amber rosary which he was supposed to finger in moments of abstraction, the crowning mark of a true believer. Never, needless to say, had he known that the rosary is a vestimentary elegance



with the Moslems rather than a religious expression.

They sallied forth, Gualbi locking the house-door after them and bringing away the key. It was of wrought iron, a foot in length and constituted of itself a formidable defensive weapon. He intended to see his master safe to Si Beji's door and there wait to bring him home. The adventure upon which they were embarked had its risks.

CHAPTER VII

THE FÊTE AT SID' BEJI'S

THEY were late, as they had intended to be. The door-keepers had slackened their early vigilance for the attractions within, and Ben Garrou found no difficulty in passing by the sleepy porter. The *t'aleb's* green turban secured them place and salutation as he pushed his way with assurance. He, too, was sumptuously, if austere-ly dressed. But his companion's splendid proportions drew all glances to himself.

Any apprehension that Townsend may have felt about his ability to carry off the rôle he had, perhaps rashly, assumed was soon set at rest. For one thing, the house was lighted by lamps instead of the flood of electricity he feared, and not too well lighted at that, noticeably in the ante-chambers and passages, where Moorish hanging lamps shed a pleasing but insufficient illumination.

The palace appeared to be immense. They

passed through long arcades that squared about orange and rose gardens, where colored lanterns hung,—changing the fountains' play to skipping-ropes of jewels,—and unseen waters called to each other softly. In some, a weird string music came from shadow places under clumpy pepper-trees. And once a boy's high, colorless voice penetrated plaintively above a turgid, cat-gut accompaniment. Barefooted negro boys in gala dress circulated with glasses of chilled and flavored waters, with *buzeh* and *boukha*—a brandy, this, made of figs and invented by the exiled Moors to console themselves for the lost delights of Granada. Townsend knew the legend and thought it better than the beverage it fathered. There were coffee, of course, and cigarettes. Each man had one, except the inveterates who settled down in rooms apart to their hookah; and the air over all hung blue and finely perfumed, as with a smoke of incense.

Townsend saw, with relief, that among these Moslem aristocrats his own ball-gowning was equaled, if not eclipsed, at every turn; so that any misgiving he may have harbored on the score of attracting undue attention by his magnificence was quickly dismissed.

He followed with Ben Garrou, shouldering the

silken, sandal-scented *djebbas* of the crowd, catching the velvet brush of dangling flowers against his cheek, the close glance from dark, self-contained eyes. Like a vast undertone, the low, courteous voices swept through it all. Many who knew Ben Garrou stopped to exchange a few words, and, as he was with a friend whom they did not know, did not detain him, but gravely saluted the stranger and passed on.

No one looked for Si Beji at this hour. He was apart in the hall of honor with his guest, the Scheikh, and the notables especially designated to meet him.

Slowly Ben Garrou edged a way to where was the dancing, guided by the gusts of pipe and string music and punctuating *dar'bouka* that reached to them. There was little overcrowding, for the guests came and went, choosing their favorite dancers, and leaving when others came on. The two young men found a place well to the front.

It was the usual two-story and domed harem-court with which Townsend was now familiar. Only this, like the entire place, was of exceptional beauty in its proportions, in the lavish use of porphyry and inlaid marbles and *nukshhadida* work and costly tapestries.

Under the surrounding arcade the guests sat, on divans and on the floor, in rows six deep. Above ran the gilt-trellis of the women's gallery through which the fine flower of Moslem society, supposedly, looked down. Whether from accident or design on Ben Garrou's part, Townsend found they were directly facing the principal point of the gallery. The knowledge of those unseen eyes, perhaps fixed upon himself, gave him a strange self-consciousness. He drew back a little within the shadow of the arcade. Apparently, he was alone in this feeling. He saw that Ben Garrou, all of the turbaned assemblage about him, were tacitly insensible to the hidden proximity of beauty. He resolutely set himself to control his upward glances, knowing that not to do so constituted the unforgivable breach of Moslem etiquette; and he was soon absorbed in the dancers.

They were six in all, ranged on a divan, their feet tucked under them. Townsend could compare them only to a row of exquisitely wrought jeweled idols in the uniform fixity of their onyx eyes and immobile pose. Below them, cross-legged on the floor, were the blind musicians with their curious three-stringed violins, archaic citharas, flutes and *dar'boukas*. The white orbits

of their upturned sightless eyes in the midst of this dissipated revel gave Townsend a sudden dolorous impression. An impression that remained even whilst he gave himself over to the appeal and witchery of the dancing. The haggard contrast their wanton mutilation presented seemed devised by a subtle, infernal machination of degeneracy, with a view to heighten and stimulate the super-refinement of sensation and pleasure. The thought sent a cold touch under his skin. Had they put out the eyes of these unfortunates, as they pierce the eyes of nightingales, so that they may put more soul into their music? Or was it to permit them to play before the ladies of the harem, maimed instruments to fescennine enjoyments they may not share?

A dancer came forward. She was a girl of the Ouled Nail, a Saharan maraboutic tribe that furnishes the most reputed native dancers. She had a dark passionate face and voluptuous form. Her coils of black hair were henna-dyed and shone like copper. Her eyes were closed, her expression dead, her hands crossed like a Madonna's over her bosom. She was clothed in black gauze with many gold ornaments. Great gold hoops in her ears, heavy gold anklets, and bracelets to the shoulder, and rows of coins circling her neck. All her fortune

as a prosperous *ghasiyeh* was on her person. Her sandals were thonged with chains of gold, and a massive gold-wrought stomacher was worn on the abdomen and terminated in a long, narrow strip to the knee. Gauze and gold—it was all the clothing she wore.

The music of the blind men rose and fell to the measure of the dancer's swaying body—plaintive, broken, syncopated with sobs and unrest and unrequital that crisped Townsend's nerves until he could have cried out. Then a note of hope crept in. Timid and slow at first, it rapidly grew in measure and violence until it became a wild, insensate tumult—a very bacchanalia of abandon and suggestiveness; and the dancer, palpitating and exhausted, regained the divan.

The assistants took breath, nostrils dilating, otherwise impassible and grave.

The negrillos handed about their divers drinks.

Another dancer advanced. She was fair skinned, tall, and alluringly lean, and a marvel of artistry, from the floating nimbus of her gold gauze *ôjar* down to the incomparable modeling of her bare, satin-skinned, jewelled feet.

There was a sudden tenseness of attention in the hall. She was evidently a favorite.

"It is Zaneb, the most beautiful *ghaziye*h in the Khalifat," explained Ben Garrou in Townsend's ear.

The girl poised a moment—it was not standing—her great almond eyes looking straight before her like an idol's, her arms held high like breathing wings. They spread and undulated, seeming to lift and bear the whole lithe body. Never, Townsend thought, had he seen anything so gracile, so ethereal as the modeling of the slim body. It was like that of a beautiful boy. There was something awesome in its pulchritude. One did not realize she was dancing. There was only a faintly suggested rhythm, a rise and fall of the arched feet, with undulation of the sensitive hands and wrists and arms and plastic *torso*. And gradually the measure warmed and quickened, the rhythmic motion gained. Into the languor of the sinuous figure crept fire and the thirst of desire, the woo and promise of impassioned longing. And Townsend let himself go. As a mere choreographic interpretation, he had never imagined anything like it. Where had the girl gotten her emotional genius? Through what long lineage of erotomania had it come, to thus incarnate in this little Mauretanian dancing-girl the unsatisfied cry of the Messalinas of all time!

By a curious caprice, he found it was her little jeweled feet that most compelled him. Hypnotized, he watched their rise and fall like heart-beats in their unabated motion. It seemed to him that he had never really seen feet before. Never, certainly, had he known their revelation of beauty, and provocation and appeal. Each moment they became more conscient, more instinct with a personality. His senses yielded to the fascination of the slender, fragile ankles, the high-bred arch with its lacework of azure veining, the tiny heels, henna-stained, and shining like burnished mandarines; the curved toes tipped by their disks of polished coralline. And as he watched, he could have caught the tiny, twinkling, wayward things to his breast.

He forced his eyes to her face. It was pale and slightly thrown back as if to drink in some inspired ichor through the scarlet cup of her parted lips. The veiled eyes lay like sealed wells of mystery under the shadow of their long lashes.

Townsend tried afterward, several times, to describe the details of that dance, but he never succeeded. Who, he asked, may describe light and sound; the woo of springtime or passion of the tropics, or silence and desolation of ice-locked

stretches! We, of course, feel these things, and only see them through our feelings. Townsend could have told easily enough the tumultuous impression Zaneb's dancing produced on himself; but nobody was at all interested in that. In fact, the hallucinating intensity of the blind men's music, the serpentine crescendo of the dancing up to its frenetic climax, with the heavy odors and violent emotions were all beginning to be too much for him.

He turned to Ben Garrou. Over the ascetic face of the descendant of the holy marabout was spread a deep glow like reflected copper. His mobile nostrils quivered. His eye was lost in ecstasy. His whole being thrilled.

The music ended in a long wail. The *ghaziye*, languorous and inert, shivered. She was pale as death. Her arms dropped lifeless to her sides; and she slid, almost fainting, onto the divan.

"Allah! Allah!" cried the men in rapture.

"Let us go," urged Townsend, who felt really ill. Perhaps it was the effect of the sweetish, barber-shop stuff he had incautiously sipped earlier. Without waiting, he shoved Ben Garrou before him through the crowd and toward the nearest garden.

The night air was better than wine to his pounding arteries. He clutched at his turban.

"How would it be if I took this confounded thing off?" he ventured, feeling he had a clothes basket on his head. "My head isn't shaved like yours, you know, and it's deuced hot."

For the first and only time on record, Ben Garrou snickered. The unheard-of spectacle the American threatened to make of himself—that of a true believer ceremoniously dressed and *without* his turban—can perhaps find its only analogy in that of a European in full evening dress minus the trousers. For the Arab covers his head far more severely than the European does his legs. "*Si Taouncind*," he hurried, earnestly, "by the three Allahs of the *Roumis*—by all the Prophets you hold sacred, I beg of you to keep on your turban." He glanced about them apprehensively. "Shall we go?" he suggested, uncertain of what Townsend might elect to do next. "We have been here more than four hours."

"What!" cried Townsend, confounded. It had seemed to him half the time. He looked at his watch. It was, indeed, well on to four o'clock. And as they came out into the street, the *fegr* was

calling from the mosques and a faint bar of yellow streaked the East.

They picked up Gualbi with his lantern and key for which latter, happily, there had been no use, and Ben Garrou left them at the corner of the 'street of Culpable Leisure.'

"It's been a wonderful time, Gualbi," said the Emir of One Night to his faithful *chaouch* as the latter helped him undress. "And it's a dream of a costume," eyeing the trailing glory across the bed, somewhat regretfully.

"It's your costume, *mossieu*. I ordered it of Ali Chanchan the tailor. Which is why it fits so well."

Townsend looked a moment at Gualbi. So the little gala night had been arranged a week ago.

"And the poignards?" he asked, picking them up. They were marvels.

"The poignards are on approval. But the costume I have already paid for. Two hundred *douros*." He took it up to fold it away.

Townsend sat on the side of the bed balancing his turban on a meditative forefinger.

"Those blind musicians, Gualbi, with their white eyes——"

The former Turco looked up as the other paused.

"Oh! *mossieu* need not pity them," he reassured philosophically. "It's a very profitable business and comes down from father to son. They blind them when they are children. Thus they may play before great ladies in the harems, and put many *douros* in their pockets."

"Ah!" It was nice to feel there was adequate compensation. Between its guardians and its musicians, the maintenance of the harem as an institution demands a heavy toll.

He rose, put on pyjamas and slippers, and lighting a cigarette, tried to read. He knew he could not sleep. After a time he laid down his book and went out into the rose garden.

A broad flush of carnation reached up out of the East. The crimson roses lighted to hanging lamps. In their glow, the swaying form of the *ghaziye* rose before him, her beautiful, slim body, her twinkling satin-skinned feet.

CHAPTER VIII

MOSLEM MATCH-MAKERS

GUALBI closed the door after him, drew his dangling two-foot-by-two cotton handkerchief from his belt, as he might his saber, and stood at attention. Under which demonstration, Townsend put down his book. He reached for a match for his narghileh and disposed himself to listen in comfort. It was the only thing to do when Gualbi thus formally gave out his desire for colloquy. Apart from which, his impressive retainer always interested Townsend. In the present instance, as that worthy proceeded, his interest gave way to a variety of sentiments in which sheer amazement swallowed the rest.

"But I—I say—er—I'm not thinking of getting married, my good fellow," he managed to protest. "Really, that's going it some, Gualbi. I never told you to hunt me a wife, did I? Not, at least, that I can remember."

Already he felt helpless in the hands of this implacable purveyor of 'what was good for him.' There was about Gualbi an unswerving pursuance of the end in view that was like fate itself. But the line must be drawn, really now, at wedlock.

"No, that is true. You did not tell me to find you a wife. But I understand, *mossieu*. You are not like the others. Not like my young lieutenant. He—the boy—was happy with any *qah'ba* so long as he could *rigoler, parbleu!* That's the advantage of the army; diet and always a good appetite. But, *que veux tu?* You need *autre chose* . . . something different. Something that is worthy to live and bloom here, in a little palace like this; and not a guard-room. Something rare and young, uncaressed as yet by the eye of any man. . . . I have such a one!"

Carried away by his own oratory, the good man produced a horn snuff-box and helped himself to a refectory pinch.

"Well?" suggested Townsend, by way of a starter, when this ritual had been duly accomplished.

"*Eh bien! mossieu*. One of the Circassian girls who danced the other night at the house of Si Beji has a younger sister. She, also, is learning to

be a dancer. Destined to the service of our lord, the Bey—to him blessing and peace.”

“Well, that seems to be a good place for a dancing-girl, isn’t it?” he ventured, somewhat at a loss for the moment, but sure the mine would be sprung in the end. And he sensed the end. Zaneb? A singing rose in his ears.

“True. It is a good place. But one must be strong for that. And it now happens that the little one fell sick after the last *Bairam*. Not very sick; but a sort of fever that has left her delicate. Thus it is that Zaneb, her sister, does not want her to do the hard work of a *ghaziye*h.”

“Zaneb, her sister? Surely, the girl I saw at Si Beji’s is not a Circassian.”

“She is not. She is of good Berber blood—Zaneb. The little one is only her foster-sister. And if she proposes her to you, it is because you will treat her well. You are not like the others.”

“And how does Zaneb know I should treat her sister well?” demanded Townsend.

“Because she saw you at Si Beji’s while she danced. And she knows.”

“Why doesn’t Zaneb propose herself?” Townsend strove to keep his voice even.

“A *ghaziye*h!” Gualbi looked scandalized.

"Dancing-girls do not marry, *mossieu*. The little one has never been unveiled, nor danced before men."

"How old is she?"

"As to her age, Allah keeps the count. We meslemin do not count by years. But that she is young, untouched, and all that is fair, I can swear by the beard of our lord the Prophet—on him praise and blessing."

"And what is her name?" The net was drawing about him.

"She is called Haouia [the Breeze]."

"Ha-ou-ia." Townsend softly repeated the caressing syllables, as if mysteriously drawn toward them. Gualbi's eyes watching, gleamed with triumph. Had he not known?

"And how do I know she will please me, this Breeze of beauty?"

"She lives at Khereddine. Her foster-mother will bring her to town and we can arrange for you to see her."

"No . . . I will go myself to Khereddine," Townsend swiftly concluded.

Khereddine he knew to be a little spot on the coast near Carthage and about seven miles by rail from Tunis.

"I shall see if Haouia is all that you say she is. And now, what is the price?"

Gualbi's eyes fixed on Townsend's. To every bargain its fair profit.

"You will give the dot to the foster-mother; four thousand piastres. That is for the trousseau. A commission to me of one hundred *douros*. And a necklace of pearls to Zaneb."

"Very well," returned Townsend. "We shall see."

He rose and walked off toward the garden.

A sudden longing possessed him. But he was thinking of Zaneb. A longing to hold to his breast two little satin-skinned feet that danced, danced to the crazy beating of his heart. They were dancing into his life.

Pshaw! He had gone moony over a dancing-girl. "Well, why not?" he angrily retorted to the Accusative Self within him. "Wasn't he here for all the experience he could pick up—and more? Damme, I'm no catharist."

"Yes,—but marrying. Come now. That's a little steep in the way of pick-up knowledge," urges the A. S.

"Marriage . . . nonsense. This is a latitudinal marriage, dissolving in the 42° North and binding

only within the parallels of Islâm, where the allowance is four resident wives and an extra one in every seaport a man's business takes him to. Laws made in the good old days, when a Moorish merchant traveled from Cordova to Cairo, with Allah's blessing, in three full moons and a crescent. Come now, be honest, A. S. Let's leave hypocrisy for Christian lands. . . ."

He broke off a mandarine and shied it at the unoffending peacock, in the stately act of unfurling its fan. The startled bird escaped it by an outraged hop and retreated to cover in an aggrieved fit of sulks.

"Yes, Juno, my queen," he called after the unconscious pavo, "that's what I said, a lime-washed, pharisaical hypocrite. As if this isn't what it's been coming to from the beginning! What else was in the back of my mind when I started this whole thing—rented a house and began Arabic and took to wearing a *djebba*! Leave your smugness where it belongs, A. S., my friend; for your club and the purlieu of fashion. Here it has no market value. Life is on simpler lines. And we dare to be what Allah made us."

Ben Garrou, gingerly pushing open the door

on the housetop, found him looking out from the dovecote over the sunset-tinted roofs. The young Moslem looked at him curiously. He did not deem it essential to mention that he himself was halves in Gualbi's commission of the hundred *douros*.

"We can have our lesson here," said Townsend.

"No," replied the *kateb*. "It is against our customs. The housetop is for the women."

"But there are no women here, in this house," objected the other.

Ben Garrou without raising his eyes gave a large gesture which swept surrounding space. "And the others," he said comprehensively.

"True." Townsend had often seen women upon the roof. But they had not seemed to mind the presence of a *Roumi*.

Together, the two young men went below.

CHAPTER IX

A BRIDE BY THE LAW OF THE PROPHET

A FEW days later, Townsend, with Gualbi to pilot him through the mazes of his Moslem courtship, got off the train at Khereddine.

It was a deserted little place once important as the residence of the famous General Khereddine, now consisting chiefly of ruins—those of the palace leading in the general decrepitude—and a vast grove of palm trees which once made part of the princely gardens. Except for the station and a little café-marabout, there was nothing living. Across the field, dotted with crocus and asphodel, by a path over the waste gardens, was the beach along which were a few low, scattered houses. Further inland the white roofs of several villas could be seen. In front rose the Bou-Kornine mountain and to the left the hill of Byrsa where three thousand years ago stood the temple of Tanit, the Juno of Carthage.

As everything had been arranged for the meeting which was to afford the first sight of the presumptive bride, Gualbi at once entered the café to wait, whilst Townsend took the path to the beach.

There was not a soul in sight. It was past the hour for bathers. The women always to be found washing in the sea had gone home, their bundles of linen on their heads, the children trooping after them like little brown kids after their dam. A pulsing silence, brooding alike over land and sea, depressed Townsend as he found his way along the beach.

Rounding a sharp curve brought him in view at some distance of three haïked forms coming toward him. Two ladies, to all appearances, taking the evening air and accompanied by their maid, judging by the coarser *haïk* and red cotton bundle the third carried.

This was the sign agreed to, and Townsend's heart began to quicken stupidly. His eyes riveted upon the smaller figure of the girl.

It was almost childish in its outlines, in the quick, bird-like movements with which she detached herself from the others, stooping to pick up shells and cuttle-bone, then half running to catch up with them. Tall, graceful in her difficult

draperies; but a child pursuing her child's play by the sea, thought Townsend. He felt disillusioned.

They drew nearer, the girl too engrossed to be conscious of his presence, the others more advised. The older woman made a discreet little sign to him. Then she turned.

"*Ya Haouia, ezneb* [Haouia, hurry]" she called back.

The girl rose quickly, her hands filled with shells, and at once came running toward her, thus facing Townsend. Her veil blew out behind her as she ran. And he saw, framed in the white drapery, an exquisite, girlish face. Delicately oval, cream tinted, and slightly flushed from running; small, straight nose; scarlet, dewy mouth. And the face, however lovely, formed but a setting for great wonderful almond eyes. Like dusky pools by night they looked, innocent of *kohl*, but black-rimmed with their thick ebon lashes. And so limpid, so trusting and girlish that Townsend's heart contracted with sudden tenderness.

She dropped the shells into the *khedima's* hands and caught her wayward *djar* into place. But through it, Townsend could still distinguish the luminous beauty of her eyes. As if at sight

of the stranger, the three women turned into a side path.

An indefinable depression, that the occasion did not seem to warrant, seized Townsend as he retraced his steps to the café. Through the far evening quiet the sea stirred and whispered prophecies; came a faint sobbing of tiny waves as they crept up the sands at his feet. Across the enamel of the gulf a trail of red flamingoes took their heavy flight. He raised his eyes to the Bou-Kornine, mountain of Moloch, sacred to the rites of the cruel Carthaginian Baal-Ammon. Its two horns glowed redly with the lowering sun. The thought crossed his mind that the age of human sacrifice is not over.

On the way back to town Gualbi's anxiety was manifest. Was Townsend satisfied? He could not understand his taciturnity. As for his gloom, it seemed hardly in place to the good fellow, if the prospective fiancée had come up to expectation. And he naturally concluded that the exhibition had been a failure and the deal was off.

But to Townsend, the whole situation suddenly appeared fantastic. He was not going to commit himself. Further, he had a scruple.

This child—she was little else—with her slender,

hardly nubile figure, her innocent, trusting eyes and pensive mouth; had they even consulted her? He knew the rectitude of his intentions toward her. An Islâmic marriage, not a Christian one. But she, after all, was coming to a master. How could she possibly love him, stranger to her religion and race? He knew perfectly that the personal feelings of the bride have no smallest place in a Moslem union. She, herself, would be the last to expect it. But Townsend had cumbersome prejudices on this point. And again. For her, would it not be an opprobrium among her people to belong to a *Roumi*? She could do better in her matrimonial venture. Suppose he failed to make the poor child happy? He felt uncomfortable, doubtful, now, of the outcome of his experiment which had seemed so easy and uncomplex before. He was rather ashamed of his rôle of modern corsair.

"Gualbi," he said to his uneasy servitor after dinner, "if I don't take Haouia what will become of her?"

Gualbi made a wide gesture as who should say: "What does one expect to become of a beautiful dancing-girl who's not able to dance?" He shrugged. "Perhaps she may become a *mouquera*

of a man like Si Beji—even of our lord the Bey, *mossieu*. Who knows?"

Townsend sucked at his narghileh in silence. "She'll always be better off with me than as one of the concubines of that old reprobate, the Bey, or of some old man like Beji," he reflected, reassured.

"But since she has never danced nor been unveiled, why may she not become the *wife* of some rich Moslem?" he persisted.

Gualbi stared at him in unconcealed astonishment. He shook his head. The *Roumi* mind was beyond his poor fathoming. "Because rich Moslems want children of their wives, *ya Sidi*." It was obvious.

"Well. What then?" cut in Townsend like a pistol crack, that made the old soldier pull up sharply drawing his wits as well as his heels to position, as the other waited his answer.

"Surely *mossieu* knows—that part of the preparation for a professional *ghaziye*h is to make child-bearing impossible."

"Surely I don't know," snapped Townsend. Silence, and Gualbi slid out.

So that was it. Poor little Haouia! Maimed, and fallen ill and thrown with her beauty upon the

world. A curst country. (Apparently he had never heard of the Great White Way.) His scruples faded into thin air, dissolved to nothing in an immense pity and chivalry. . . .

Townsend's suit was approved and ratified by the settlement *bar geld* of the several assessments and the due presentation of the pearl necklace to Zaneb, who, to do her justice, had not specified her remuneration, this being an added touch of forethought on Gualbi's part. He believed in strengthening the details of a contract.

Townsend ransacked the *souks* for wedding presents for his bride. It was soon known he was a buyer and he was besieged by offers. Rare pieces of the goldsmiths' art from the treasure of departed *beyas* down to junk of every imaginable provenance, each with its tale of legend and mystery attached, were alike thrust upon his acceptance, until he half expected the offer of Aladdin's lamp itself.

Into one purchase, however, he put much time and forethought and not a little sentiment. Occasionally, in the antique shops, he had come across a certain large coffer of cedar wood overlaid with brass—sometimes silver; wedding chests, they told him. It is the custom in Tunisia for

matrimonial aspirants of noble family to present these filled with their gifts to their unknown betrothed. Townsend had been particularly struck by the beauty of their archaic shapes which reminded him of the reliquaries of the Middle Age. They are expensive and rare. He succeeded, however, after some search, in finding what he wanted, a superb piece, entirely plaqued with repoussé silver resting on heavy ball feet and lined in faded crimson and gold damassin. It was fitted with a little jeweled key and bore the arms of the Bey Hamouda and the date of the Hegira 1170. With it came its pedigree duly authenticated.

Townsend was well pleased. In it he disposed his gifts, locked it, and had it taken to Zaneb's house in the city where Haouia was staying pending her marriage. The key he attached to a long neck chain and sent it by Hafid, who sported a brand-new outfit in honor of the coming event.

He was glad to know the pleasure this gift was sure to give her. For such a coffer is given among Moslems, only on the occasion of a marriage. The most pampered, most adored of concubines may not possess one. The significance of his gift was great to his little Moslem fiancée, show-

ing her in what light he regarded their future relationship.

Some slight changes were made in the disposition of his house, under Ben Garrou's enlightened supervision. The wedding feast was looked to by Gualbi who summoned a staff of culinary adepts to its preparation. And if there were not several hundred friends as marriage guests, as would be the case with a native bridegroom of Townsend's means, like him, at least, there was a gathering of beggars from the street and of strangers from the highway, who were bidden to partake freely of the feast provided and leave their blessing on the newly-wedded in return. Such are the ways of Islâm. And Townsend upheld his end of it royally.

Haouia with her foster-mother Lalla Laou—Elqmer (Madame Moonlight) transported themselves and their belongings and their maid, who rejoiced in the cheering name of Niah' (Lamentation) to the house of the new *zaouj* who thus, at a single throw, found himself supplied with a full-fledged harem.

Henceforth, visitors like Ben Garrou were restricted to their part of the house, and the sphere of Gualbi's ministrations did not extend beyond

Townsend's rooms. Niah' held joint sway with him in the kitchen where, also, Madame Moonlight circulated freely by virtue of her discretionary age. But Gualbi continued to hold the purse-strings, which, after all, was the main thing, scepter of authority and badge of office; and under him, as of old, was Hafid. . . .

There was something indescribably touching to Townsend in the submission and sweetness of his little captive wife, for such she inevitably appeared to him. She was docile as a child to his least wish or sign; as a child, too, in her adorable shyness which gave way at times to brief moments of cajolery and caress, during which she was the most perfect plaything one could imagine. But the great eyes remained absorbed. Is the Eastern veil but a symbol? he asked himself, outward sign of a closer inviolability drawn by the bartered chattel against the rights of the acquirer. He sought to gain her confidence, tried by a thousand little devices to break through her reserve, before attempting to awaken her affection. Somewhere behind this fine mask was, or should have been, a soul. Tucked away under the many Moslem wrappings was a vibrant Moslem entity that roused his *Roumi* interest to the utmost. He would find it.

In part, he was rewarded. She began to blossom as a rose. Her beauty became dazzling. Her dancing was not so assured and vigorous as her sister's, but for that very reason it had perhaps more languor, more charm and seduction. And there came, at last, an evening in the rose-garden under the stars when he caught the tiny jeweled feet to his breast and, for a long moment, held them there. . . .

The beautiful days slipped by, like a rosary of amber through the fingers of the great pilgrim Time, hypnotizing, by their recurrent benison, into grave and happy forgetfulness. And Townsend allowed himself to slide softly into the interior beatitudes, held by the low voice of a woman and the lullaby of his own heart.

And he was hardly aware of it when, on the twenty-seventh of June, Italy and Turkey went to war in the Tripolitana.

Book Five
The Holy War



CHAPTER I

THE PILGRIM

HE was a Bedouin from beyond the hills.

Many ropes of camel's hair, coiled about his head, kept the dust-stained *haik* in place. The sands of the Sahara had sifted their dryness and colorlessness into all of him, clothing and beard and skin. A parchment man—all but the black bead eyes, which thrust themselves into the circled crowd of listeners with the swift play and flash of rapiers. The sonorous Arabic gutturals rose on his voice into the sirocco's shriek, or dropped to the woo and lullaby of the love-spaced nights of the desert.

It was a wonderful story. Wonderfully was it told. Never had Sabine—standing outside in the doorway of the little café with Antoninus—imagined such passionate and poetic recital possible.

The theme was the one ever dearest to the

naïve and imaginative children of the desert. A peerless *beya*—model of virtue; a jealous husband—monster of vice; a heroic emir—solon of wisdom, and a flame-eyed, flame-garbed *djinnee*. There were the stamping of steeds, the clash of scimitars. One heard the tinkle of the camel-bells and low swish of their sliding feet over the sands, their ruckle in the tent shadow of the moonlit oasis, the gurgle of hidden waters, the love sob of a *dar'bouka*. One felt all the emotions of the desert life, its cruelty and voluptuousness and tragedy; and its siren call. The Arab listeners sat spell-bound. Over them passed the speaker's breath like wind over a field of grain.

Sabine had listened before to the itinerant Eastern story-teller's yarns. But they were as nursery tales to the might of this dramatic epic. Hardly a word here and there did she understand. But she understood the story.

The man stopped to breathe. A long shiver ran through the squatting audience. Their tense faces relaxed. Mifta and his boy passed about with copper pots, replenishing the tiny cups.

The Bedouin sat down—Mifta himself supplying him with coffee and a cigarette. His rapier eyes, in an instant, cut Sabine and Antoninus out of the

darkness. He said a word into Mifta's ear, and the *kahouaji's* glance followed his. Antoninus met it and beckoned.

"Mifta," handing him a five-franc piece, "a *douro* for the pilgrim, and the blessing of Allah on his journey. It was a good story." He turned to Sabine. "Shall we go?"

"It's wonderful," she commented, as they walked homeward. "The man's a dramatic genius. I didn't know a word he said, but I didn't need to. Speech certainly is not *his* language. Even you were interested."

"Intensely so . . . in several things."

He was thoughtful. After a moment she spoke. "Where does he come from, do you know?"

"His dress shows him of the Beni Senoussis from the far South. But he comes from nearer—or I'm mistaken—from the Tripolitana."

Again he lapsed into silence.

"Shall we stay awhile on the terrace?" he urged when they reached home. "It is not late."

"No, I've had enough of the stars."

"Sure?" smiling into her eyes.

She nodded her good pleasure.

"Then, good night, dearest. I have letters

to write and must go out again to post them for the morning courier."

He gathered her soft, slim hands to his lips, longly, with the caress that was part of him and that she loved. Her hands, she knew, were "the especial object of his adoration," as he put it, "more beautifully yourself than you. So judge." She had grown to feel all the passion that he put into the caress and to respond to it. Lovers cherish and fondle their sweethearts' hands, she knew; perhaps because the caress of the lips is denied them. And she thought it eminently characteristic of him, the husband who was also the most ardent of lovers, that, when her lips were waiting, he should choose her hands.

"Good night," she returned, with shining eyes and thrilling finger tips.

For an hour he read in his den, then put the book aside. From a closet concealed in the hangings, he took out a baggy *seroual*, jacket, turban, and *babouches*, all well-worn, and of the poorer class. In a moment he had put them on, slipped an electric lamp into a pocket with several pieces of silver, and fastened a stout walking stick about his waist. Over all he wrapped a white woolen *bermous*, turned down the lamp, and locked

the house door after him as he came out into the street.

It wanted ten minutes of midnight, the hour fixed by police regulation for all cafés to close.

He hastened his steps, following a narrow side alley which brought him into the main street at a distant part of the town. Turning into it, he came back to Mifta's café. As he drew near, he found, as he had expected, the Arabs coming out, the boy putting up the shutters, and Mifta turning out the lights. He waited in the shadow. The last man passed. The feeble rays of the night lantern in the little vestibule was the only light. Another quarter of an hour he waited before he came up and entered. The watchman, an indiscriminate huddle of *bernous*, already slept on his stone bench.

Antoninus took him by the shoulder.

"Ali Mzali, you may go home," he told him.

"To-night, I, myself, will stay."

The old man started up, not knowing how long he had slept. He was very old and wore a white beard.

"*Mlih* [good]," he fumbled, stumbling to his feet and out.

Antoninus wrapped himself in his *bernous*,



pulling the cowl over his head like the doorkeeper, and took his place, beginning to breathe heavily.

In a few moments Mifta half opened the door and looked out.

"Keep awake, Ali Mzali," he cautioned softly.

"Yes, yes," was the drowsy answer.

Presently, bernoused figures slid into the vestibule.

"*Mouris-el-Khiar* [Initiation of the Select]" signaled one man after another in a low voice.

"*Khoud' t'riqek* [Pass thy way]" countered the doorkeeper.

He counted the mystic number as they entered, three times seven men in all. Then the heavy bolt within was drawn to. Only a slit of light framed the solid door. Hardly the sound of voices reached to the vestibule even when they recited the prayer.

A moment only did Antoninus hesitate. Then he thrust his *babouches* into his girdle and, lithe as a cat, swung himself by the ledge of the little grilled window-hole up into the square opening for the flag-staff, and squeezed through onto the roof. Lying flat, he drew himself along to the chimney hole, and with infinite precaution removed the glazed chimney-pot that topped it.

He was rewarded by a fair view of the upper half of the room beneath.

He had known it was a meeting of one of the Secret Orders of Islâm, which one he had come to determine. But even from his present colgn of vantage, it was not easy to follow their mystic jargon without their key of attitudes, and their voices were low and guarded. However, these formalities accomplished, the whilom story-teller took his place almost under the chimney-hole. One by one the *Khouan* (Brethren) kissed his shoulder and exchanged the ritual *deker*. After which they seated themselves, drawing close to hear the word brought by this secret *Khalif* of their Order.

Every word now reached to the watcher on the roof. Intently did he focus his mind upon the points he needed to retain. Soon, he had heard all he wanted. Whilst they were yet engrossed in the recital, he noiselessly replaced the chimney-pot, regained the flag-staff, and dropped to the floor. By the roundabout route he had come, he quickly regained his own house.

"As I thought," he reflected, resuming his European clothes while he locked the others safely away. "A *Khalif* of the Derkaouas and from their

djemmaâ (grand Orient) at Fez. . . . I always thought Ben Zegri was their *mokhaddem* here. But he was not there to-night."

None better than Antoninus could appreciate the significance of an agitation at this time of the fanatic Derkaouas, an essentially Tripolitan Order, but founded at Fez. They professed a strict asceticism in religious matters and absolute radicalism in matters politic. Their object was the expulsion from Islâmic countries of all unbelievers, Christian, Jew, or free-thinker. Irreducible fanatics at all times, the Turco-Italian war in Tripoli was eagerly seized upon as a pretext and construed by them into a holy war. It was not a territorial struggle for the possession of the Tripolitana. Once more it was Islâm against the hated Giaour, the holy forces of the Prophet, as of old, against the polluting presence of the infidel.

Ever through the centuries has the smoldering faith of Islâm leaped to sudden flame as, time after time, the *jherid juhîd*, or holy war, is preached by some reckless zealots. Throughout the length and breadth of Islâm the secret messengers are sent. Gaunt, dust-burnt pilgrims from the South, the flame of fanaticism in their wild eyes and disordered gesture, appear in far scattered villages at

dusk, preach the word, and pass on into the night. The time is at hand. Soon shall arise the *Moulay Saâ* (Master of the Hour) to lead them to victory. He will drive the Giaours into the sea. Their destruction is foretold. At last shall the Maghreb, the West, be rid of this foul spawn. Strange coins or symbols are circulated. And the word is passed on. Under the Bedouin's tent, through distant oases, around desert camp-fires and in far troglodyte villages, like the flame of burning hemp, it runs. Suddenly, from Tunis or Fez or Tlemcen, a *sherif* arises and waves aloft the green banner of the Prophet. And the land is steeped in war.

This was what was being done now, "and under the very nose of the French authorities," Antoninus reflected. "And not only war, but massacre," he added sadly. "Taxation and bitter punitive reprisal upon the ignorant and fanatic fellahîn, while those higher up, the leaders, who hope to profit by their crazed but glorious dream of a united Islâm, escape."

Antoninus sat down and wrote two letters. One was to the Resident at Tunis asking for a personal interview on the following Friday. The other was "to his Brethren of the Order of Sidi

Mohammed Tidjini of the *Zaouia* (lodge) of Bou Ftis," then at Tunis, and informing them that he would be among them Thursday upon urgent business of the Order, and should await a guide at the usual hour and place.

This done, he sealed the letters with his crest and went out to post them for the first courier in the morning.

As he went to bed, he found himself wondering what part the ambitious Kadhi of Bemblah hoped to reap in the coming harvest of insurrection.

CHAPTER II

WHEREIN TWO ADVERSARIES LOCK SWORDS

BARELY did Antoninus turn into the narrow street when a waiting Arab detached himself from the shadow of the wall. He raised his hand up and out and Antoninus gave the Order's *deker*.

Without further words, they walked on quickly.

A slight complication, undoubtedly, this changing the place of meeting each time, but not surprising to one familiar with the Arab mentality, and not wholly unnecessary, perhaps, in view of the recent political imbroglio involving the Senousis—there are seven important secret societies in Islâm to-day—whose machinations were being investigated by the Government with just severity, and whose evil repute could easily confound, in the official mind, the peaceful Tidjinis—an Order vastly different.

“What lord lives there?” asked Antoninus as

they passed a handsome portal under which three Arab serving women had just disappeared.

"No lord, *ya Agha*," replied the man. "It is a rich *Roumi*, who has taken a Moslem wife."

"A Moslem wife." Antoninus smiled grimly. That accounted for his being over in this quarter. Some crank. "What's he doing?"

"That we do not know, *ya Agha*. So Ben Garrou, the *kateb*, has been set to watch him. Also, he has been taken to the house of Si Beji-el-Bechir, so that all of ours may know him by sight."

Antoninus frowned. He was no advocate of this system of constant espionage even if the presence of a *Roumi* under these conditions might seem to warrant it. The man himself, he reflected, if he was here with a secret purpose, must be aware of his position and its risks. Otherwise, he was some erratic creature harmlessly mounting a hobby. In which case, it would soon be understood and he, himself, treated well.

"Who is his *chaouch*?" he pursued.

"Hadj Gualbi el Djezaïri [the Algerian]"

"A-hah!" was the sharp retort. The *Roumi* at least was in good hands with Gualbi. He said no more. Graver thoughts were uppermost in his mind.

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There were about thirty of the Brethren assembled when he entered. They were all of his own *Zaouia* of Bou Ftis and, with few exceptions, leading Moslems of Tunis and the near towns.

They greeted him cordially, and, after a moment, by invitation of the presiding *mokhaddem*, he rose to speak.

"Khouan of the Bou Ftis and pious Mokhaddems of our holy brotherhood of Sidi Mohammed Tidjini—may he live forever in eternity." There was a reverent movement of assent among the brotherhood.

"It is not concealed from us that out of the Tripolitana the *jherid juhîd* is being preached in Islâm. Confirmation of these rumors is abundant and proof is not wanting, as I am here to testify." He then recounted the facts he had surprised at the recent meeting of the Derkaouas which were listened to with intense attention.

"I need not remind you," he continued, "to what excess of fanatic outrage these ignorant and misguided followers of a saintly man, the marabout Derkaoua, stand committed in the past. I ask you to remember Souk Ahras where, crazed by the wild promises of unprincipled leaders and drunk with hashish, they flung themselves into

a French redoubt singing the holy praises of Allah. Not one came out alive. Deluded victims, not to the holy cause of Islâm, but to the criminal ambitions of the men higher up. May they rest forever in the peace of Allah. . . .

“I ask you, is this to be repeated? Are you, who are responsible before Allah and society for the ignorance of the fellahîn, going to suffer them thus to become the dupes of those, their *hidden* leaders, who reap the spoils—emolument and power—and take no risks?

“To-day, with Stamboul and Rome at war, Moslem and Giaour would be made to meet again, and crafty greed has not hesitated so to represent the present conflict in the Tripolitana. But the fellahîn must be undeceived. No longer, as of old, does occupation of the territory imply renunciation of the true faith. The *Roumis* respect the Prophet’s teaching, while they turn the land that was wilderness into a garden of plenty. If Islâm shall rise again it must be through the wealth and civilization of the *Roumis*. They bring to the fellahîn abundance, to the children schools, to all, justice and equality.

“What is the formal pronouncement on the subject of Islâm’s most renowned doctors them-

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selves, sitting in council? I ask that the *Khou* [Brother] Amor Ben Garrou, our *Kateb*, find and read for us the last *fetwa* given in the Djama Kebir of Kairouan, the holy city, and confirmed in general council at Mecca."

There was a murmur of assent, as Antoninus sat down and the Secretary found the *fetwa* in question and read as follows:

When a Mussulman people whose territory has been invaded by the infidels have fought so long as there is any hope of expelling them, and when it is certain that the continuation of resistance can bring naught but misery, ruin, and extermination to the Moslems without any chance of overcoming the infidels, the former—whilst retaining the hope of shaking off the yoke some day, with the gracious help of Allah—then may consent to live under Christian rule with the express condition that the True Believers shall enjoy the free exercise of their religion, and that their wives and their daughters shall be respected. Such are the conclusions of the *fetwa*.

There was general voiced approval and Antoninus with a gesture thanked Ben Garrou who sat down.

"All of us, of course, are familiar with this teaching," Antoninus concluded. "I venture to recall to you that the Prophet—to him praise and



benediction—went even further. In the Koran we find this sentence: 'An infidel government may endure if it be just; a faithful government, if it be unjust, should perish.'" Antoninus turned to sit down.

A slender form, that he had marked from the beginning, rose.

"May I ask our Brother, who is *not* born of Islâm, what are the conclusions he would have us draw?"

There was a faint sneer on Ben Zegri's fine face as well as in the words. But Antoninus had closely watched him in his place behind the presiding *mokhaddem* and was prepared.

"My conclusions are evident." He met and returned Ben Zegri's cold look. "Loyalty to my Brother Tidjinis, who have conferred on me the Higher Initiation and the honor of their confidence, forbids me to stand by and share, by my silence, in the iniquity of the present movement whose true nature may be unknown to them. I know, as many of them do not, the strength of the Protectorate, the certainty of defeat and sure destruction of the misled, duped insurgents, while immunity awaits their secret leaders." He looked Ben Zegri in the eyes and their glances met, level and hard.

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"I arraign the motives of these leaders. I ask them to recall *the word*, at whatever personal sacrifice and, before it is too late, to furl the green flag of the Prophet in peace, and thus prevent the wanton shedding of Moslem blood and ruin of Moslem homes. . . . Let those who are *born* leaders of Islâm do as much. I have said."

He sat down. General comment followed. The *Khouan* were with him. While most of them had been aware of the agitation which had spread out from the Tripolitana, now, for the first time, they knew it as the work of the Derkaouas, who are in constant rebellion to all and every authority and in direct conflict with the aims and teaching of the learned and wealthy Tidjinis. These were prepared at present to repudiate all share in the growing agitation and throw their weight against it, as Antoninus had hoped. Unlike other Mauretanian States, Tunisia accepts the French Protectorate. The Republic offers greater security than does Beylikal rule to its leading men whose sons are educated by, and often in, France, thus fitting themselves in another generation to take a controlling hand in the government of their country. It was from men like Ben Zegri that the trouble came. Men who were ambitious for their own and not for

the coming generation, men who needed to dominate and could not bend to the supremacy of the curst invader, however opportune or enlightened. What mattered the lives of a few miserable fellahîn? They are but cannon fodder. Such must ever be sacrificed that great ideas may live. Religion and justice, liberty and progress have their hecatombs.

In the general discussion that ensued Antoninus had his first leisure to observe closely the change in Ben Zegri. He was paler and looked worn. The ascetic lines of the handsome face had become those almost of emaciation. The impress of high self-mastery, that had so prominently lent an indescribable spiritual beauty to the remarkable features, had given way to one of concentrated, reckless passion evident to the casual physiognomist. In the clear, magnetic eyes now glowed the lurid flame of the fanatic. Domination, even to cruelty, lined the thin mouth with the sear of a fixed idea. So looked Peter the Hermit and John Knox, Torquemada and Genghis Khan. The transformation was a painful one, and Antoninus was sincerely moved. "A soul in ruins," he reflected. "Already the pinions of the Archangel are trailing in the dust."

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While Antoninus and the *Mokhaddem* exchanged views, Ben Zegri had been leaning over in earnest talk with Si Beji. Looking up, the Kadhi of Bemblah addressed himself to Antoninus.

"And what if a *Moulay Saâ* be found, and the uprising is successful—the infidel dogs be whipped back to the kennels from which they come?" A fierce, uncontrollable gleam of fanaticism as well as ambition was in his eyes, startling Antoninus by its sudden revelation.

"With the present armed force France keeps in Tunisia, that can never be, and *you know it*. What are flint-locks and spears against bayonets and cannon?"

"Many spears against few bayonets and *no* cannon. The thing is to choose the time," was the significant, too quick, reply.

Antoninus dropped his eyes to conceal the flash of intelligence he knew they held.

So the insurrection was well on its way,—planned and only awaiting *the word*. And he knew, now, that a *Moulay Saâ* would be found to give it. The hour indeed was at hand.

His thoughts raced furiously while the *Mokhaddem*, holding him affectionately by the shoulder, continued to talk and the meeting broke up.



"It is difficult indeed to realize you are not entirely one of us," the good man was saying. "We need more men like you. Some day, perhaps?"

"What matters the creed, Si Ali, so long as the intention is upright and all men our brethren. It is by cups of cold water we shall be judged."

"True, true. But Allah gives also *ed din* [the faith] as the reward for charity and truth. You will see."

"*In ch' Allah* [as God pleases]," said Antoninus gravely, and left him.

CHAPTER III

THE RESIDENCE TAKES NOTICE

ON his way to the Residence, Antoninus met Chertier who stopped to shake hands, then, seeing he was in a hurry, walked on with him.

"What news?" asked Antoninus.

The other shrugged protestingly. "I can't make it out," he complained. "There's unusual agitation among the Arabs. The Resident is always away, and Fleury, in his absence, is too easy-going—or unintelligent. What the fight about Tripoli has got to do with us, I don't see. They are boycotting the Italians here and threaten to do them some nasty turn."

"Don't believe it for a minute," averred Antoninus. "It is against the whole European element, French as well as Italian, Jew as much as Gentile. They are preaching the 'holy war' and await only the appearance of a *Moulay Saâd*."

Chertier stopped abruptly in consternation.

"It's not possible you people aren't aware of this!" exclaimed Antoninus, incredulous. "That's where your aloofness from the native interests lands you. You go about in broad day with closed eyes."

"Just Heaven! Does the Residence—does Fleury, know this?" Chertier's stout features expressed their utmost of cherubic anxiety.

"He will within the half-hour. Adieu. I shall see you again."

"Do let me know the result. I never was more perturbed in my life. The *holy war*! Well, well."

Antoninus left him fussing on the sidewalk, crossed the broad Place of the Residence, and was shown at once to Fleury's private cabinet.

The Resident himself, as usual, was in Paris, where his political interests—compared to which those of the Protectorate were insignificant—demanded all of his fostering supervision.

Fleury, the First Secretary, was an amiable young man, who had reached to his present position in consideration, not so much of high civic qualification on his part, as of the sacred traditions of a nepotism without which a Latin government 'by the people' loses one of its reasons to

be. In the happy vernacular of the *coulisses*, 'a pull' had hoisted him to his present altitude, and the substantial weight of the uncle at the other end of the rope kept him there. In more callow days, Antoninus had rendered him frequent service and they had continued friends because of reciprocal good-will rather than for any congeniality or sympathy between them.

"Personally, I can't say how much I thank you, *cher ami*, for this information," Fleury said at the end of their half-hour's talk. "Without underrating, of course, its importance, I may say, however, that the Residence has its eyes open."

"Indeed. In that case, given the apathy of its attitude, I can't compliment its intelligence," was the dry rejoinder.

The First Secretary flushed. But he knew Antoninus's fearlessness, his utter disinterestedness and unassailability; and that there was no earthly use in resenting what he said. Besides, he was more disturbed by the precise nature of this information than he cared to show.

"You dispose of every means of investigation," went on Antoninus. "You have under your orders the political as well as the municipal police and the troops. Without questioning your knowledge of

what is being plotted in the secrecy of the zaouïas, in the *cercle* of the Young Tunisians, I am come to formally denounce to you the nature of the complot. It remains for you to take effective measures or bear the responsibilities."

"Certainly we accept the responsibilities. But I hope to convince you that you exaggerate the situation. The Protectorate has Tunisia well in hand. You know as well as I do what these thirty years of our paternal policy have gained for us with the native population. They are with us heart and soul."

"Yes. You will soon be united by the ties of blood also—shed in the streets of Tunis."

Fleury thought best to ignore the grim interjection.

"There is, I admit, some feeling against the Italian element, natural, inevitable even, given the situation in the Tripolitana. The government has no part whatever in that. It is the affair of the police; and they can easily cope with such insignificant street brawls. We have proof that the Arabs are profoundly attached to France. As to their attitude toward Italy—" he shrugged significantly.

"But Italy is a friendly power," protested

Antoninus, justly shocked at this flagrant indifference to the laws of neutrality, "and you are bound to protect her citizens. *Voyons*, Fleury. Do you want a reprimand, perhaps a recall, from Paris?—Your information has led you into error. This confidence in the loyalty of the indigènes is, to-day, a naïveté on your part. To-morrow, it will be a crime. You should know the Moslem bourgeoisie for what it is. Rehabilitated by France, educated even by France and in French schools, its heart still is filled with bitterness and rancor against the French Protectorate."

Fleury appeared impressed out of his easy-going optimism. He knew Antoninus to be in close touch with the Moslems, and in friendship with them.

"Perhaps you are not altogether wrong. I shall send at once to the Scheikh el Medina, and see that he assembles the *maareks* without delay and orders them to preach conciliation and calm to their coreligionists."

"That is not enough," returned Antoninus emphatically. "For while they are urging peace, rich and powerful Moslems are inciting to the sacred frenzy of the holy war. To-day, the Young Tunisians in their Club are openly haranguing the people into revolt."

"Well, what would you advise?" asked Fleury, turning harassed eyes upon his tormentor.

"You have the troops. Hold them in readiness. Use them promptly, decisively. As a preservative, not as a restorer, of order."

The other made a gesture of discouragement. "Troops! That is exactly what I have not, as you must know, *de Madrillos*?"

"Yes, I do know. But I wanted you to admit it. It is inconceivable!"

"We have been obliged to dispatch all our available forces to Morocco."

"So that, to-day, Tunis is virtually disgarri-soned?"

"If you will. We have two companies of *Chasseurs* in the city, and about forty *Zouaves*. The nearest troops are at Bizerte and the *Joyeux* are at Tlemcen."

"Bring them up," urged Antoninus with energy. "Let there be plenty of uniforms in the streets of Tunis. Wire to Toulon for the *Colonials*."

"You believe the situation warrants that?" was the surprised question.

"My dear Fleury, I know it. Within another twenty-four hours a *Moulay Saâd* will have risen to head the insurgents, and the green flag of the

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Prophet will float once again above the dead and dying."

The First Secretary, at last, was thoroughly shaken from his apathy. With the taking over of the supplemental duties at the Residence, he had looked for anything but a crisis like the present. He was disgustedly resentful of his chief's constant absence which threw all the work and responsibility upon himself. Noting his look of annoyance, Antoninus took him by the shoulder.

"Look here, Fleury. Let our talk be entirely personal, not official. I live much closer to the Arabs than you others of officialdom. And you know I'm not an alarmist. Still, with the troops here, things will be all right. Promise to do what I suggest without an hour's delay. Nothing decorates a peaceful city like plenty of uniforms."

He smiled and held out his hand to the younger man.

"I promise. Thank you, Madrillos. A man can always count on you. I've been caught napping. But this place is getting to bore me." He touched the bell for an aide-de-camp. "And Madame de Madrillos?" he inquired as he accompanied Antoninus to the door.

"Well; thank you."

"Tous mes hommages, je vous prie."

"Manquerai pas," returned Antoninus entering the lift. "And now for Mabrouk's report," he said to himself as he signaled a taxicab.

He gave the chauffeur the address:

"Cercle des Jeunes Tunisiens, Avenue de France."

CHAPTER IV

TAKES LEAVE OF NADJA AND MABROUK

B ELOVED [Sabine read, for the fourth time since the letter had come that morning], Mabrouk will hand you this and give you all details of happenings here. The situation is more acute than we had thought, and it is well that I should remain a few days longer. I hope to be able to avert much misery, even bloodshed, among the poor, exploited fellahin. And knowing this, your big woman's heart will accept at once, I know, the insignificant delay. Yet insignificant not at all, for it means longer separation from you, *bien aimée*. Each hour away from you is so much credit I advance on happiness. And Allah must repay it, and with usury. And yet, never, really, are we separated. To me, you are an ever-present, cherished reality. The thought of you is tangible as your dear, visible presence. Your love fills my soul and regulates my heartbeats. In you, *mon adorée*, all my manhood's dreams and longings find fulfillment. And for this alone, how immeasurably dear are you to me, *aziza*, my cherished one! . . . The little chestnut curl above your ear—I see it as I write—is more to me than a kingdom. And your woman's hands—I

caress them, darling, with a beating heart. Again and always, I thank you for the gift of yourself—for the new meaning it has given to my life, for the fulness of joy it has brought into it, the wonderful heart-rest of your love.

Sabine closed her eyes and leaned her head against the cushions of the carriage. A long, tingling tide of responsive passion flooded her with exquisite happiness. Antoninus's dark eyes rose before her. How well she knew the thrill of their look! She could feel his caress upon her hands, the enveloping contact of his arms about her. Far other than her love as a bride was this, her love for him as a wife. The realization of the renewing joy she gave him with herself, of the depth of his love which yet never accepted as a right, but always craved of her infinite bestowal. Love, the supreme, enthralling science, the exquisite art of the heart, and not love the instinct, the necessary and sanctioned appetite, was what her married years had taught to Sabine. It was natural passion perfected like a wonderful natural voice and conserved far into life's decline by the beautiful cultivation of a master. For love, she mused, like all things worth while, must be learned. Primeval, untutored instinct is the headsman of enduring love.

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She opened her eyes with a happy sigh and met Mother Clémens' smiling look fixed on her. Love had made a very beautiful woman of Sabine.

"I never knew horses to be so slow," complained Nadja. "Here's Mabrouk overtaking us and I know he left Bemblah an hour at least after we did. I wonder if he can't come in here with us and tell all about Antoninus and Tunis over again."

"He certainly cannot," Mother Clémens affirmed. "Moreover, we shan't even see him at Susa. I must go to the Convent at once."

"Mayn't Nadja stay with me for a little shopping?" asked Sabine, meeting the girl's eyes, as she nodded with all her might behind her god-mother's shoulder. "I shall bring her to you at the Convent in good time."

"Very well," assented Mother Clémens. "I wish you would remain with us at the Convent for the night, instead of driving back to Bemblah alone."

"Thank you. But I shan't be lonely." Not she, with Antoninus's letter tucked against her breast.

"I believe you," quoth the nun, advisedly, smiling into her friend's flushing face.

They fell into talk about the news Mabrouk

had brought with Sabine's letter from Tunis that morning. He had concealed nothing of the situation as it was generally understood by the average observer. But Mother Clémens read quickly between the lines. She had experience to teach her the dire possibilities contained in the term 'holy war.' Nor, in view of this, did she like Ben Zegri's removal, with his family, to the Kadhiat of Djerba near Tripoli. She had been called to Susa overnight by an important meeting of her Order for the morning, Nadja accompanying her to see some of her old friends among the Sisters. But she meant to be at home as soon as possible, when any hour might develop some fanatical incident.

"Why has the Kadhi kept his departure so quiet, I wonder?" presently said Sabine, musingly.

"Well, Ben Zegri has never been exactly communicative," was Mother Clémens's light answer.

"Mabrouk says he is appointed Kadhi near the Tripolitan border where it is entirely Moslem," put in Nadja. "Evidently, he has had enough of the Roumis."

"Has his family gone yet, do you know?" Sabine asked of Mother Clémens.

"Their town house is closed, but they may be still at Es Skanhès. Now that I think of it, I

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have not seen Zorah for some time. Nor the Kadhi either, for that matter."

"He has certainly kept aloof. When I last saw him, I thought he had greatly changed."

Sabine did not add that, upon that occasion, she had decided then and there to keep carefully out of his way in future. Now, she was intensely relieved to know that he was betaking himself and his overwhelming personality to the Moslem South, anywhere away from her path.

In Susa, they deposited Mother Clémens at the Convent, Sabine and Nadja returning on foot down the hill to the Magazins Généraux, while the carriage put up at a nearby khan, until Sabine should be ready to return to Bemblah.

Of course, Mabrouk soon managed to join them. Equally of course, Sabine managed to lose the young people recurrently amid the alluring mazes of the big shop; and each time Mabrouk's eloquent black eyes spoke her their gratitude. It was charming to see his love-making, after the manner of the Roumis. What flexible creatures they were, these men of the East! She wondered if Nadja's half Moslem soul might not prefer a little of the mystery and hyper-valuation that attaches to the Moslem's treatment of woman.

"Of course, Europeans don't value their women as the Maures do," the girl had once said to Sabine. It was obvious. Do we constantly risk the loss of the thing we prize? And upon the latter's remarking that Western women have their liberty like men do, she had answered quickly: "What good is it to be free if you are unhappy? It is better to be in a harem and be loved than free to earn your own living and go childless." And Sabine believed it was. So much for corrupting environment.

They went to the Place de la Plaza and listened to the military band in the Kiosk, and enjoyed the crowd and the ices, and, all too soon, it was time to take Nadja to the Convent. As it was, Sabine should not be in Bemblah until well after dark of the long summer day. Mabrouk was staying a few days in Susa. He said good-night at the Convent door.

Sabine remained but a moment with Mother Clémens.

"We shall be home to-morrow evening, God willing," said the latter as she came with Sabine to the door.

"Very well. Be sure to bring me Nadja for dinner. I shall be expecting her."



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She found her carriage outside, a heavy closed hired vehicle that had held them more comfortably than her victoria. The coachman was one of the native Jehus and unknown to her. But one of her own men had come on the box, as usual, to attend to her purchases and general comfort.

"Where is Hamid?" she now asked, in surprise, of the strange Arab who held the carriage door.

"*Ya Lalla*," explained the man, "Hamid's brother has met with an accident and they sent for him in great haste. He left me in his place and to tell you."

"You are Ali Chaban, the *souki*'s brother," she said, looking at him attentively.

"No, *ya Lalla*. I am Chouk, his cousin."

"Very well, Chouk," she said, stepping in. "Tell the coachman to make his best time to Bemblah. We must be there by next muezzin-call."

The man mounted to the box, gave the order, and the coachman whipped up his horses.

Sabine settled herself for the long drive. Soon they had circled the town walls and Susa was behind and nothing about them but the level grays of sea and sand with the grayer ribbon of the road winding between.

She leaned back comfortably, wrapped in the warm shelter of her thoughts of Antoninus.

It was quite dark in the carriage, although the lamps flared out ahead at either side. In front, the backs of the turbaned men loomed high against the windowed square of sky. The road was deserted, the steady beat of hoofs the only sound.

But her thoughts were rosy bright and companioned her solitary drive with precious fellowship, while the voice of her happiness sang aloud within her. She closed her eyes. And softly she slid into dreams, not forgetfulness; into the interior light of those who, in their sleep, are of the star worlds.

The square of night through the windows changed to moonlight. The two men on the box above shone white. How was that? They had put on their bernouses and the late moon was up. What time could it be? She looked out. The pallid, fleeing country was new to her. The watch on her wrist, which she could see distinctly, said twenty minutes past eleven.

She tapped sharply, imperatively on the window. "Ya Chouk! Stop the horses! What is this? Come here!"

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As well call to the wind. Neither of the forms before her moved. On and on went the horses.

She lifted the flap of the peep-hole at her back and looked out. Another carriage was following, topped by two bernoused Arabs like her own. She tried the doors. Both were locked.

So it was no accident. She was the victim of some well contrived plan. Abduction? She had read of such things. It was a favorite plot in tales of fiction of the Orient. She had always found it exceedingly banal.

She leaned back without further attempt at resistance. Indeed, its utter uselessness at present was apparent. Here, on the deserted road, who was there to hear or help? She had no idea of her whereabouts, beyond that they were on the national high-road. To the right, the twin horns of the Bou-Kornine lined on the paler sky. They must be nearing Tunis.

She sat back quietly. Strange to say, she had no feeling of fear, even of apprehension. She could at least understand these men and talk to them with the authority she had learned to employ. Her inbred belief in the sacredness of her personal liberty made it impossible for her to consider the idea of effecting an abduction of her person as



other than preposterous. In this age, and in the thirty-eighth parallel! She laughed scornfully. She was probably the object of some moving-picture scenario setters.

But incredulity may not stand up for long before facts. It is hard to controvert reality. And presently, sitting there, while the racing landscape blurred by, a slow and fierce and ungovernable indignation gathered within her, straightening her full lips, and painting bright splotches of flame on her pale cheeks. Her hands clenched.

"How *dares* he!" she panted.

CHAPTER V

FOLLOWING AN EXCHANGE OF TURBANS

ANTONINUS'S visit to the Residence was directly productive of one result which certainly was without the pale of any possible forethought, or even conjecture on his part.

Convinced by the urgency of his representations, Fleury acted promptly and to the point. The Resident could not reach Tunis before three days, even admitting his immediate compliance with Fleury's summons by wire. By whatever means, the impending rioting must be held in check until its responsibility could be shifted to the shoulders of the Resident in person. As we have seen, the First Secretary's choice of the diplomatic career had been made not so much with a view to the services he could thereby have an opportunity of rendering his country as to those his country should thereby be afforded of rendering him. The nice adjustment of their balanced reciprocity

would be seriously impaired by a fiasco such as threatened now. Consequently, his action was radical, if tardy. The ringleaders should be dealt with summarily. The real men behind the movement, though known to the secret service, were too powerful for him to attack single-handed. But he hoped that the Government's action regarding the lieutenants would be effective in calling them off.

On the day of these happenings, Townsend smoked and read in the comfort of his sanctum as was his care-free wont. He had cursorily followed the fortunes of the war then going on in the Tripolitana through the dispatches in the *Dépêche* and the inflammatory leaders of Monsieur Tridon. It all seemed a good piece off to him, though he knew it was just across the border. What seemed of deeper immediate interest was the nature of the growing restlessness of the population among which he lived, and which he at last recognized for the war's inevitable repercussion.

Personally, the new order touched him little. Gualbi administered his household with the same zeal and efficiency in spite of frequent absences. Ben Garrou was, if anything, more attentive in

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his professorial and friendly presence. Serenity reigned in his harem. In fact, in so far as he only was personally concerned and apart from any altruistic compunctions, the Italians and Turks might go hang.

His affection—better call it love—for Haouia had increased while it had retrenched. Each day his joy in the appeal of her grew with her growing beauty, as also each day traced more clearly the delimitations of her response. The quality of the passion she inspired in him could not answer to the full measure of his Occidental demands. While she filled his senses and charmed away the old unrest, she left his heart unsatisfied, his soul as arid as the rock Horeb. A soul-mate, even a help-meet, it was not within her power to be. Such an incongruity was beyond her conception of any possible relation of the sexes. He had tried to prevail upon her to eat at table with him. The poor child was embarrassed, unhappy, ashamed of the atrocious incorrection of such a departure from all Islâmic practice. So he gave it up. He gave up many little plans he had cherished which made for comradeship and equality with his Moslem bride. Did he make her happy? He could never tell. The adorable coyness and

reserve, yet abandon, of the first days had been succeeded by wayward moods and strange capricious spells, when petulance alternated with tenderness and timidity with turbulent passion. Stormy gusts of temper now sometimes floated to him from the women's reservation in his domicile, and several times of late he had caught Niah' with swollen eyelids,—signs and portents which told him that the Moslem soul of his little *zaouja* had stirred.

To Townsend, smoking tranquilly on this 16th Qaada, in the year of the Hegira 1329, entered one Ben Garrou, *kateb*, true servant of the Prophet. His gliding salamaleks as he slithered across the tessellated floor, so long incomprehensible to Townsend, were now made plain, thanks to Haouia's enlightenment. He is saluting the invisible presences that fill the room, guardian spirits of the house. "*Esselamou alikoum*," he murmurs politely, with a tango dip to right. "*Esselamou alikoum*," dip to left. Repetition and dip to front. Townsend grinned. What he had taken for the profuse Oriental courtesy that so beggars our brief greeting, thus resolved itself into the recognition accorded presences superior to his humble self.

Hafid, in Gualbi's absence, had admitted the

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visitor, and the boy now waited Townsend's orders.

"Bring *charbal* [lemonade] and *boukha*, Hafid; and Si Ben Garrou's narghileh."

"No, *ya h'abibi* [my friend], thanks. Hardly have I the time for a narghileh. A cigarette, if I may."

To-day, he avoids meeting his host's eye, and an unusual color stains his pale cheek, tribute, Townsend good-humoredly concludes, to the feminine inspection through the gilt-trellis above, of which he is aware.

"What's your hurry?" the host asked, pushing over the box. "Try those in the case," as Ben Garrou selected, hesitating. "They're a new kind to you, the Pèra."

Ben Garrou lighted one. "I have work at the Mosque," answering Townsend's question, "that can not be put off. These are good," he interrupted.

"Put some in your case," invited Townsend.

The *kateb* produced his cigarette case and filled it, thoughtfully.

"I really came in to know if you still want the string of ambergris. Mahoud will keep it for you. But he asks your good pleasure, as he has other buyers."

"Yes. I will take the necklace, if it's the one he showed me. Heart-shaped beads—twenty-six of them." Townsend was greatly pleased at the thought of securing this unique string of beads.

"Very well, then. I shall tell Mahoud and you may have it when it suits you." He looked at his watch and rose. "I did not know it was so late. No, don't trouble to come with me."

But Townsend saw him to the door. He noted the unusual feverish manner, something quite new to the self-contained *kateb*. But he was not sufficiently interested to feel curiosity about it.

Instead, the thought of the necklace appealed to him. It was early still and he decided to go and see Mahoud at once about it. It was a decided rarity, and he wasn't taking risks on its acquisition.

He reached for cigarettes preparatory to going out, and found that Ben Garrou had taken away his case by mistake, leaving his own. It was not unlike his, of jade, and had Ben Garrou's name laid on in gilt lettering.

He slipped it into the pocket of his Arab vest and went into his dressing-room for his *bernous*. The evening would be chilly.

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"Hafid!" he called in passing. But, to his surprise, the boy emerged from the dressing-room. "Well?" Townsend questioned.

"*Ya Arfi*," the boy explained anxiously, "Si Ben Garrou returned just now, after you showed him out. He came in here. And then he hurried out, before I could speak to him. I came in here to see. Look, *ya Arfi*, Si Ben Garrou left his green turban. And your turban is gone."

Sure enough. Townsend's aristocratic, gold-threaded turban was replaced on the little turban rack, by the maraboutic head-gear of the learned *kateb*.

"What the deuce is Ben Garrou up to!" grumbled Townsend, surprised, and somewhat disgusted. "I haven't got thirty-six turbans. I've got one. And I want to go out."

He picked up the green intruder and looked it over. It was good enough of its kind, barring the color. There seemed to be no help for it. Hafid got him a fresh white cotton skull-cap from the pile in a drawer, which Townsend put on his shaved head, then fitted the turban. It was all right, a trifle tight, perhaps.

"I'll be back for dinner, Hafid. Tell the Lalla

when she asks. Don't disturb her now."

"*Nâm, ya Sidi* [yes, sir]."

The street was flooded with the glorious July sunshine and silent as a street named Tombs-of-the-Bey in decency should be.

Townsend had little time to give his mind to the realization of either fact, for he had not proceeded fifty yards when two French *sergents de ville*, accompanied by a plain-clothes detective, emerged from an alleyway and abruptly confronted him.

"*Halte-la!*" commanded one of the policemen.

Townsend stopped, as he was bid. "Hello! What's up?" he asked, pleasantly.

No one condescended a reply.

"Green turban. This is your man," said the detective.

One of the policemen laid a detaining hand lightly upon Townsend's arm. The other produced his identification paper and proceeded to check off points of identity, lifting quick eyes to Townsend after each item as he read.

"Slender, medium height"—hum, above it I should say—"No beard, age about twenty-eight, well-dressed, green turban, speaks French." He read on under his breath, then folded the paper

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and put it in his tunic. "Yes, it's our man. Come on," to Townsend.

"One moment, please," said the latter with decision. "Who am I supposed to be?"

The *sergent* shrugged. "Who you are — Mohammed Amor Ben Garrou, Tunisian subject."

Townsend gave a crisp, mirthless laugh.

"I'm nothing of the kind," he said. "Come with me to my house back here and I will get my passport and papers. I'm an American subject and my name's Townsend."

An irrepressible grin widened the three faces simultaneously.

"*Cré nom!*" exclaimed the detective admiringly, "he's a clever one for an Arab, with his 'American subject.'"

"Come along, Mohammed. Quit your fooling. We've no time to waste," said the *sergent*.

"But I tell you, you're mistaken," returned Townsend with energy. The pleasantry was going too far.

"Well, tell your yarn to the prison authorities. Here's our warrant for you. Our business is to serve it."

The man was right. Townsend saw the futility



of further protest now. He cursed his *bernous* but drew it tightly about him and followed his captors the short distance to the Dar-el-Bey. But here he fared no better than with the policemen. The jade cigarette-case bearing Ben Garrou's name completed his identification with that worthy, and he found himself accommodated with a cell for the night.

Before giving up his belongings, he selected the one fifty-franc bank-note his pocket-book contained and pushed it across to the unimpressible young Frenchman at the desk. "A bit of paper, please," and, reaching over, he helped himself and to pen and ink likewise.

"I should like this to reach the American Consul, Monsieur Chertier, without delay. It is my right, I believe?"

The young man ran his eye rapidly over the few concise words on the open slip of paper, and smiled amusedly. This Ben Garrou was a monumental bluffer. He could give pointers even to the Americans whose nationality he claimed. For the lark, he would see his bluff.

"Very well," he said.

"Thank you." Townsend turned to follow the turnkey, then stopped.

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"What's the charge?" he inquired over his shoulder.

"Political," returned the young man, in the act of stowing away the fifty-franc note.

CHAPTER VI

GUALBI FINDS HIS OLD SEYYED

“**A**H!” exclaimed Chertier, frantically signaling to Antoninus on the sidewalk, as he told his coachman to turn in. “You’re the very man I want. Step in, will you, de Madrillos—as a personal favor. Not a moment to lose. Thank you,” as Antoninus got in beside him. “To the Dar-el-Bey, *cocher*.”

“What in the world is it?” queried Antoninus as they rolled furiously along. Chertier was out-bustling Chertier.

“What do you make of this?” was his answer, spreading out Townsend’s scrawling summons before the other’s astonished gaze. “Didn’t even know he was in the country. Been staying with you in Bemblah, of course? *This* is from the Driba in the Dar-el-Bey. What does it mean, anyway?”

For all answer, Antoninus continued to stare

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at the paper incredulously. Townsend here! And in la Driba, the Arabic jail! He was as bewildered as the Consul.

"There's some grave mistake, of course," he said at last, composedly. "We'll soon fix it."

Chertier gave him a quick look. So he was no wiser than he himself.

When the two men entered his cell, Townsend felt like a small boy caught in petticoats. As for them, decked out in his Arab togs and green turban, Townsend was hardly the figure they expected to find. Neither ventured comment, however, even Chertier feeling there might be more under the situation than appeared at first blush. Townsend briefly and satisfactorily explained his position, and Chertier left them to make the necessary declaration to the prison authorities. He looked a bit worried.

But left alone, the muscles of Antoninus's face twitched ominously. His sense of humor threatened to overcome all other considerations as his eye rested on the maraboutic, turbaned figure of his American friend. Through what Arcadian fields of adventure had this masquerading New Yorker been roving to round up thus and in the grip of the law. He tured aside an

instant to compose his features, but Townsend struck in with his usual frank laugh.

"Laugh away. I can't look a greater ass than I feel, you know. Only I'd give something if Chertier hadn't had the happy inspiration to bring you along."

Antoninus took him by the arm. "My dear fellow, you don't look the least bit an ass. You look—I'm bound to confess it—an eminently respectable, prosperous and," glancing at the fatal turban, "saintly Moslem. It's the adventure which is . . . rather overwhelming. I know this Ben Garrou; a clever, crafty fanatic and a finished scoundrel, as he now shows himself. Of course, your being mistaken for him appeared to me inconceivable until now I see you. The authorities at the Residence want him badly. I wonder how he got wind of it."

Chertier, accompanied by the Director of the prison, came in. Chertier introduced Townsend.

"It's all right. Monsieur le Directeur understands. You've simply been the victim of a mystification, intentional without a doubt, and the clever perpetrator has succeeded in getting a few hours' start of the police. Monsieur here is kind

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enough to accept my personal responsibility for your liberty."

"Accept our excuses, Monsieur," the Director added, politely. He was eyeing Townsend curiously. He could not blame the *sergents* for their mistake. If the man before him was not an Arab *kateb*, he looked a *kateb's* first cousin.

Townsend suitably acknowledged the Director's civility, carrying off the situation as best he could, handsomely seconded by Antoninus, and they left the cell.

Outside, they encountered Gualbi who had been in attendance all evening. Such news travels quickly in the Arab quarter, and a half-hour after Townsend's arrest Gualbi had hurried to the Dar-el-Bey and succeeded in seeing his master. Reassured by the latter's confident anticipation of speedy release, the resourceful *chaouch* had found and served him a good dinner, among other attentions to his comfort; and his presence had contributed not a little towards Townsend's increasing prestige in the jail.

Now, as the four men came into the hall, the Algerian drew up at attention, then started violently. Ignoring Townsend's friendly nod, which indeed he did not see, he came hastily forward

and, stooping, kissed Antoninus's shoulder, murmuring low words of greeting. He was unaffectedly moved. In swift Arabic, Antoninus answered kindly, even affectionately, touched by his old follower's evident emotion.

"How's this?" exclaimed Townsend, allowing Chertier and the Director to go on together. "You know Gualbi?"

"I might ask how is it *you* know him?"

"But he is my *chaouch*. My Providence. My vine and fig-tree. My tent pole and peg and flap——"

"Naturally—all that a *chaouch* should be. I'm glad to hear it. I know what to expect of him."

He smiled confidently at Gualbi, and the old fellow dropped his eyes like a boy. He did not intimate his suspicion now of the existence of a Moslem wife and an establishment in the Tourbet-el-Bey. Nor did Townsend. One might think that, with the Arabic mode of living, the latter had taken on the Arabic reticence regarding all family relations.

When, with the urbanities the occasion called for, they separated outside the Dar-el-Bey at the evident desire of the two friends to be to-

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gether, Chertier forbore to impose his presence further, and drove off.

"Come home with me, Antoninus. I want you to know my little place," urged Townsend. "You've dined?"

"And you?"

"Very well indeed, thanks to Gualbi here. But I must hear all about Sabine and Bemblah, and this row that's going on. I'm ashamed to say I'm not posted."

"Well. I know a place near here where your native dress will not be remarked and we may have a quiet hour undisturbed. I have important things to do yet to-night and hope you'll excuse my not going home with you. Another time, if I may."

"By all means," acquiesced Townsend, following his lead through the crooked streets of the Arab quarter, Gualbi behind them like their shadow.

"I wonder, might I have Gualbi to-night?" Antoninus asked suddenly. "He can be of the utmost service to me for the next twenty-four hours, now that I think of it. Do you need him particularly?"

"Not all all. Take him, by all means. Gualbi!"

"Ah! thank you. That's going to help matters wonderfully, as you may judge."

The three men drew apart into the deeper shadow, and in brief French Antoninus proceeded to give orders to the attentive *chaouch* which would keep him busy the night through. Townsend began to realize the magnitude and moment of the work on which Antoninus was embarked. It revealed another facet to the prism of his friend's cut-crystal character. Gualbi's instant and unqualified attitude, his significant use of the title *Agha* were so many flash lights into the haze of Townsend's estimate.

"I shall be here another hour," Antoninus was concluding, watch in hand. "After, at the *Cercle des Jeunes Tunisiens*, under the Arcade, Avenue de France. From one until three, at the Royal Hotel, rue d'Espagne. Come directly to my rooms. At the *fegr* hour, I shall be at the Grand Mosque. There I shall await you, or you me."

"Understood, *ya Agha*."

Again the Algerian touched his lips to Antoninus's shoulder respectfully, gave Townsend the military salute, and was gone.

Soon, the two friends were seated in the se-

cluded corner of an Arab café where Antoninus appeared at home, and an hour of unrestrained English posted Townsend upon all news of Sabine and Bemblah, as well as upon the present critical conditions in Tunis.

It was typical of Antoninus that he made no allusion to his friend's life in the Tourbet-el-Bey as casually revealed to him by his Arab guide the evening before. That was entirely Townsend's own affair. And so engrossed was the latter by all he was listening to that, before this supposed ignorance, he himself remained silent. It would do later.

When they separated, Townsend's apathy of the past months was gone. He was eager to have a share in the pulsing life and events that should make history in Tunisia of the next few days.

"Where can I meet you in the morning? Oh! I shall be clothed and in my right mind, never fear," with a deprecating laugh, catching the other's doubtful look at his clothes. "Shall we make it nine at the Consulate?"

"Say then, ten. I shall leave word there where to find me, if I can't be there myself."

With a cordial grip they parted.

your master I have brought him back his turban—taken by mistake—He need not trouble to return mine. I have a new one.’ And so he had.’ . . . Hafid stopped an instant while he tried to remember something else Ben Garrou had said. “Yes, Si Ben Garrou further said : ‘Tell him, his cigarette-case and *something else* I shall take with me as a remembrance of my *Roumi* pupil. Be sure to tell him that, Hafid.’ I went to the kitchen with my basket and Nyah’ told me: ‘There is no need to make any dinner. The Lallas are gone for a drive.’ And I remembered I had seen a carriage waiting at the corner, a closed *driba* for a journey. ‘And you?’ I asked her. ‘I have eaten,’ Nyah’ said, ‘and I shall take my bundle of linen and go to the *hammam*.’ When she passed out later with three bundles she said ‘Good-bye, Hafid.’ I said, ‘Why good-bye?’ for she astonished me.”

The boy hesitated, reluctant to tell the worst.

“Go on,” commanded Townsend.

“Nyah’ whispered in my ear, ‘Our Lalla has gone with Si Ben Garrou. Hush! I am glad. The *Roumis* are curst.’ Then she went out. I was frightened. I came into the court, and Si Ben Garrou was carrying out the Lalla’s silver

coffer. When he saw me, he put two silver ~~downs~~ into my hand. But I spat upon them and threw them after him."

The boy sobbed now. His sense of injury to the household dignity was great. "Ben Garrou is *el ouled es sheit'an* [a child of the devil]" he said passionately.

Townsend took him kindly by the shoulder. "Never mind, Hafid," he said dully. "I don't think any more of Si Ben Garrou. Go off to bed. I shall want you early in the morning. Mind, I count on *you*, now."

The boy lingered a moment, grateful for and comforted by the kind words. Then he went off as he was bid, leaving Townsend to look the situation in the face.

It was a sordid business, this *chef-d'œuvre* of Ben Garrou's consummating. With a flick of contempt he dismissed the man, his sleek hypocrisy and unctuous sanctity and ascetic bearing above such dastard treachery.

In his grief and soreness of heart there was room only for Haouia. Did he count so little with her? Had the utmost of his tenderness, lavishly bestowed, awakened no answering note of womanly emotion, no love response to the ardor of his caress?

Through the silent rooms, like a ghost he haunted his happiness. He turned up the lowering night light in their bedroom and threw himself upon a pile of pillows. The subtle perfume of her presence held in their silken covers, clung to the draperies of the couch beneath him, silent, sole survivor of the odorous past. A great longing laid hold of him to rest his head in the cradle of her knees, and feel again her henna-tipped fingers, like flowers, upon his cheeks; to inhale the fresh perfume of her slim, anointed body, and follow once more the magic lead of her jewelled, rhythmic feet into love's fairy land.

He rose restlessly, trying to ease this new pain, this sharp smart of the wound of desertion. That *she* had left *him*, and while he yet loved her—that was where the hurt was sorest. One day, in the long—or short—vista of days to come, he should have left her. It was back of his thought, he knew, whether he admitted so much to himself or not. How then? Hers would have been the suffering he was now enduring. But the cases hardly seemed parallel. Desertion, in nature, is a woman's sorrow. Men are usually immune to this deepest wrong.

He had loved Haouia. Yes? . . . Well, as a

woman of another race, another caste, another faith than his own. Loved her with the egoism of the *Roumi*, curious of her customs, her naïvetés, her exotic Moslem femininity; and with reserve, as one who tastes of borrowed joy to which he has only temporary right. But her woman's heart, identical to that of all other women, he had not known how to awaken. Instinctively she missed the rough handling of the master, the brutal selfishness of the male. This *Roumi* was not for her with his gentle, distant ways and careful words and fine consideration. The hot breath of the desert was in her blood, its heartbreaking cruelty of drought and solitude and desolation; but also its wild whirlwind of loosened passion, its exquisite nights of moonlit oasis. And so she had gone. To a man of her race and religion. To one who could understand and share her superstitions, respect her naïvetés and ignorance, and who, in developing the lascivity of her Oriental nature would only esteem her the more for it, believing that, for a woman, nothing is worth more than the art of voluptuousness.

With the passing hours calm returned to Townsend. "Adieu, Haouia, perfumed Breeze of Araby, that wafted the fragrance of Islâm over the

growing arid places of my life. May you find happiness beside him you have chosen; for me, poor little bartered one, you never chose. Enfolded in the green banner of your Prophet, may your love bring you comfort and the peace of Allah."

He rose wearily and went out into the rose-garden. Again, a long streak of ochre in the east reflected a glow into the heavy blooms and upon the air stole the perfumed freshness of the coming day. He stood a moment. He felt it was a farewell. The air about him rustled "Good-bye, Haouia." The roses hung their heads and, blushing, whispered her name.

The *fegr* called out above him.

"*La Ilaha illa 'llaha.*" The wonderful words trailed off. . . .

A sound behind made him turn sharply.

A woman in close-drawn haik had come out through the patio. Seeing him, she came forward, loosening her veil. He had never seen her before. She was tall and darkly, passionately beautiful. He stepped back distrustfully. What was this new mystification?

She made a detaining gesture. "No, it is you I seek." She spoke in Arabic, swiftly and to

the point. She drew from her dress a small gold *fibula* set in turkis, and held it to him.

"Do you know it?" she asked.

Certainly he knew it. He had given it to Haouia not a week before.

"And this?" She handed him a small ring and he took it, this time doubting his senses. Sabine's! A double loop of gold and platinum, they called it a *Paul and Virginia* ring, that he had given her upon some sentimental birthday, as a boy. The woman watched the swift flush that gave way to a deepened pallor on his pale cheeks, and was answered.

"Yes. They are from them both, given within the hour. Listen. The Kadhi of Bemblah and Amor Ben Garrou the *Kateb*, have all in readiness to depart for the South before next *fegr* hour. With the Kadhi's family and household goes one you know, the sender of this ring. She goes unwillingly. That, before Allah, do I testify. And she has sent me to bid you come to save her; you—thus runs her message—'whom she believes a Presiding Wisdom has put into her life for a purpose and—the time has come.'"

Townsend's senses reeled with the sudden rush of tenderness at this recall to the old-time words and

promise, so dearly and, it had seemed, so futilely treasured in his remembrance.

"It is enough," he said, recovering himself and starting up. "I am ready. But how does she know I am here?"

"Through these others, the women of Ben Garrou's household, who joined us this night in readiness for the journey. I it was who found out. They told me of the Inglesi whom Haouia has left. I knew the name, *Si Taouncind*, for that of him who was in Bemblah.

"You knew it?"

"Yes. I am Zorah, the wife of Ben Zegri——"

"Ah! . . ." Too well did Townsend remember that name. "But how comes Sabine to be here?" Growing dread shook his voice.

Zorah's eyes blazed.

"Ben Zegri has brought her, *dared* to have her brought, by force. His intent is to carry her into the South where she will be at his mercy. But he has counted without me." Her whole splendid form shook with vibrating passion.

Townsend's face set. It was not good to look at. "A minute." He turned.

"Keep your *bernous* and green turban," cautioned Zorah. "Where we go no *Roumi* may

pass. And a marabout's head is better than no head."

Townsend awakened Hafid and gave him money and charge of the house during his absence. He also left with him a line for Antoninus and one for Chertier, telling the boy where to find them in case he himself should not return after sundown.

This done, he loaded a revolver and slipped it into his pocket and prepared to follow Zorah.

Drawing her haik about her, she went out into the street. He waited until she was well in the lead, then followed warily. And his silent and heartfelt prayer, as he faced the rising sun, was one invoking earnest blessings upon the miscreant head of Ben Garrou, the *Kateb*.



CHAPTER VIII

THE INSURRECTION

THE night passed without news of Gualbi. Antoninus had his allotted two-hours' sleep undisturbed. The *fegr* call to prayer found him within the court of the Great Mosque where white-robed, silent men gathered in the dawn like some spectral brotherhood. No man spoke or recognized his friend. They were come about the business of Allah.

Antoninus detected Ben Zegri with the others, as he slipped out of his red slippers, at the door of the prayer-chamber. He did not meet the glance which Antoninus, with intention, fixed on him although the latter knew he was aware of it. With the single exception of the encounter at the lodge, the two men had not exchanged words in weeks. It was singular too—now that Antoninus reflected—with what persistence he had seemed to encounter him within

the last two days. Was the man shadowing him?

In the knowledge of the acuity of the present religious crisis, no one could understand better than Antoninus the absolute transformation wrought in a Moslem of Ben Zegri's caliber. That he had given over his splendid mental equipment to the attainment of his own selfish and unbridled ambitions, his dominating spiritual leadership to the iniquitous work of inflaming the sacredest, as well as fiercest passions of a deeply fanatical people and this to their own certain destruction at the strong hand of France, Antoninus well knew. That he was about to *strike the hour* and himself stand forth to the frenzied mob as the looked-for *Moulay Saâ*, he never doubted. Deification, demi-god to a prostrate following—perverted ambition can reach no higher.

Antoninus was alone when Gualbi joined him. The others were at prayer before the *Mihrab* within.

"It was too late," reported Gualbi. "The Schiekh had left when I reached there. He has withdrawn to the country about Kheraddine. The people are aroused. The villages are deserted. *The word* has been passed and men are pouring in toward Tunis. It is known everywhere

that the Residence has called in the troops from Tlemcen and Bizerte and that they cannot reach the city before to-night. Thus, ya Agha, the insurrection is for to-day."

Antoninus's brows drew together. "Who leads them?"

"It is not known. But a leader is promised them. A *Moulay Saâ* will show himself when the first success is gained. There is talk of nothing else among the *fellahin*."

"Come." Antoninus was already striding through the court. "There is no time to lose. To the Residence."

The morning sunshine flooded the streets where a sort of stealthy animation reigned. Groups of Arabs gathered in the covert of doors and archways. Men passed each other silently, but with swift, significant looks. Breathless expectation and a common purpose ran through all like an electric current.

Antoninus and Gualbi moved on as quickly as might be without exciting comment. As they turned the corner into the rue Es Sadikia they saw a sudden rush of Arabs, and in an instant a mob formed. A hundred indigenes armed with bludgeons and *matraques* pursued a dozen Italian

workmen who scattered wildly after some vain resistance. Struggling, bleeding, they went down and the *bernoused* mass surged over them in howling fury.

Antoninus's dark face whitened and he started to run, single-handed, against the yelling mob.

Gualbi's detaining hand closed about his arm.

"*Ya Agha*," he pleaded. "It is useless. They are already torn to bits. You can do nothing against so many."

Antoninus wheeled. "You are right. This way. Hurry!"

They reached the Residence, where confusion reigned. Accounts of the temper of the city had been duly reported. At once Antoninus reached Fleury. Gualbi repeated his account of the state of affairs in the outlying country.

The one hope now of the First Secretary was to keep the insurgents from any organized movement until the troops should arrive that night.

"Exactly what force have you in hand?" demanded Antoninus.

"Two companies of Chasseurs and forty Zouaves and—the police," was Fleury's reply.

Comment was useless.

"Then you must call on the Territorials."

"Fortunately, every man in France is a soldier."

"Yes," agreed Antoninus. "But every man in Tunisia is not a Frenchman. It will be well if you can find several hundred reservists to oppose to these native thousands. And spread over the city, your handful of regulars will be swallowed up."

"I know it. But it will have to be done. And I ask you, Madrillos, to take command of the first fifty men we can mobilize. Choose your own lieutenant. They should be ready within the hour." Already he was dictating to the secretaries, dispatching couriers to the Kasbah, setting the whole administrative machinery in quick motion.

"You can't refuse me, Madrillos," he insisted, turning as Antoninus hesitated.

"No, I can't refuse you," Antoninus answered slowly. He was thinking of Sabine. Thank God she was out of all this—out of even the anxiety its knowledge would cause her.

"Thank you," said Fleury warmly. He was infinitely relieved. Somehow, things looked better. It was only a few short hours now. With evening, the troops would be there.

Antoninus came toward Gualbi, who had discreetly retired to the embrasure of a window. He was sure of his man.

"Find out where the first fifty Territorials muster and take command. When you get them into shape, send for me. You are my lieutenant."

The old soldier's face lighted, eager as a boy's, as he stiffened into the salute. Again to fight in the French ranks and under the *Agha*. Earth could hold no happiness like this. The Arabs *et tounsiya* [of Tunisia] were liver-hearted anyway. Some of them were better shot.

In little more than two hours' time, Antoninus was leading an orderly company of well-drilled men who fell into line as naturally as if they had left the ranks but yesterday. The small contingent of regulars were posted throughout the city at points where the greatest effervescence seemed to be. One company of Chasseurs cleared the place before the Arab cemetery, where the rioters appeared to concentrate. The others kept to the Kasbah, as reinforcements, if needed. The presence of the Territorials, armed and determined, was deemed sufficient to protect the Italians, of whom fifteen dead and double that number wounded was the report of the morning's exploit so far.

The arrest of Ben Zegri, in the minds of the Residence as of Antoninus, would have put an end, virtually, to the whole unfortunate movement.

But the Kadhi of Bemblah was not identified, as yet, with the insurgents, nor had he given the Protectorate the least pretext for action against him. The presumptions of Antoninus, which were fully shared by Fleury, were not evidence; and Ben Zegri was too powerful to be arrested offhand. He must be taken red-handed. For this reason, Fleury secretly hoped that a conflict might be precipitated, without too much carnage of course, but where an appearance of success should remain with the natives; enough to encourage their leaders—Ben Zegri or others—to show themselves. Needless to say, he refrained from imparting this personal hankering to Antoninus. Of to-morrow he had no care. A thousand men from Bizerte were on their way and a company of Joyeux from Fondouk Djedid. The dreaded Joyeux would make short work of the riot.

Antoninus, at the head of his men, moved quickly from the Place de la Résidence and down the peaceful Avenue de la France. He determined there should be no further bloodshed if safety could be compassed otherwise. A word of calm and reason to these deluded *fellahîn* from one who understood and sympathized would do more than bark of gun and bite of bayonet. His thought was

with the lonely *smalas* that had so often given him ready shelter in his many wanderings, with the deserted tents and helpless families off there in the arid plains, and with these simple men whose saving grace, their faith in Allah, had brought them like sheep to the shambles. And he cursed Ben Zegri and his kind, the predatory, greedy horde that ravens on these primitive beliefs.

They turned into the rue Sidi-Maknez and before them was the Place Halfaouine, the center of the Italian Quarter. And they saw there was work ahead. A mob, increasing every moment, occupied the Place. The houses were being looted, their occupants driven into the street with blows from heavy *matraques*; men who resisted, frantic, unarmed; women who did not resist, but sank sickeningly, under the bloody strokes.

"Allah! Allah!" yelled the maddened wretches.

Antoninus faced about.

"Men, hold your fire till the command. First two rounds, fire high."

Every man looked his protest. Why spare these butchers? But Antoninus, they felt, was determined. He turned to give the order forward when Gualbi thrust a blue telegram into his hand.

"A moment, *ya Agha*."

He took it, tore it open. From Bemblah. "Sabine disappeared. Zegri's family left the country—Clémens."

For a moment his sight held the words before their full meaning leaped into his consciousness while the world went black with a nameless dread. Then the muscles of his jaw set like a vise as he crushed the paper in his hand and compelled his heavy lids upwards.

"Forward!" he shouted. The command was like a scream of pain. Electrified, the men behind leaped after him on a run.

Like a torrent they charged into the seething mob. But the crazed *fellahin* stood their ground.

"Fire!" came the instant command. And, as one shot, the answering volley rang out.

One moment the dark mass wavered and fell back. A dishevelled woman dragged back what had been a man into the shelter of a doorway. Then came a shower of stones, bricks, and missiles of every sort, with a few shots. A bullet grazed Antoninus. Some of his men were bleeding. Behind him Gualbi cursed deeply. "Fire to kill, *ya Agha!*" he urged, savagely.

Antoninus's eyes swept the dark mass of rage-distorted faces before him. "In the air. Fire!"

His voice clove the air, and again the simultaneous shot barked its answer. But, under their punishment, instinctively his men had lowered their rifles and a shiver of broken glass followed, with screams of fright from overhead.

Antoninus raised his eyes to the latticed balconies and windows from which straining heads were withdrawn in panic. Impelled by a fatal instinct, his glance sought and found its quarry. From a moucharaby opposite, Ben Zegri looked down with cynical calm upon the scene.

For one lightning flash the frantic passion within Antoninus blinded him. In all the universe there were but this man and himself, eternal foci, for mutual destruction. Themselves—and Sabine. Then the world swung back. Sanity returned and the recall to the duty he stood pledged to.

About them the mob pressed in a deadly mêlée. *Matraques* came down with a dull swish and swinge. Guns snarled and spat and knives began to gleam in a hand-to-hand fight. Arabs came running from all sides to swell the ranks of the insurgents. Crowded and outnumbered, the Territorials were faring badly.

"Close ranks!" And the men drew together, knowing from their leader's voice that the end was here.

But a second bullet whined past Antoninus. He was being singled out. Gualbi pulled him back, thrusting himself forward in his stead; but too late. Antoninus reeled as a spasm of pain shot through him.

"Done for," he muttered as Gualbi caught him.

The pain, the deadly weakness, were nothing. Only the thought of Sabine traversed him in a torture unspeakable. He gone. And Sabine alone, defenseless, and in the power of this man. On his clammy forehead the sweat stood out.

"Hold me up, Gualbi."

The effort sent the hot blood spurting from the hole in his groin. His set jaws stiffened as he crunched a groan. "Steady, Gualbi." The Algerian's powerful grasp upheld him while his hand found his heavy ordnance revolver. With superhuman will he raised it, held it without a tremor, and carefully sighted Ben Zegri. Then fired. The Arab pitched forward, and Antoninus fell a crumpled heap.

"Take aim, Fire!" on the instant burst savagely from Gualbi, left in command. And before the deadly lead, the *fellahin* dropped like flies.

Four hundred killed at the Place Halfaouine, the official report gave it.

CHAPTER IX

ANTONINUS ENTERS INTO THE HOUSE OF HIS ETERNITY

THE insurrection was over. However confidently promised, no *Moulay Saâ* had arisen to lead to victory. The troops had arrived and occupied Tunis. There remained only *les pots cassés*, the piper to pay. And, as ever, the onerous burden of satisfying this inevitable personage would be added to the shoulders of the unrepresented and duped *fellahin*.

Through the wide windows in the hushed chamber of the Residence where Antoninus was breathing his life out, the crimson glory of the west sent its annunciation to him of the coming beatitude illimitable.

All that science and skill and determined friendship could do had been unavailing. The wounded man himself reached out a bloodless hand to the head surgeon.

"Thank you, Morel. It's no use, you see. The little leaden messenger did its work. And—the few minutes left me are—very precious," The wide eyes rested wistfully upon Sabine.

Morel's quick sign picked up his colleague.

"We shall both be within call, *mon ami*."

He gave a brief order to the nurse and turned to leave the room.

At the door Mother Clémens stopped him softly, a question on her lips.

"When?"

"Any minute," he replied. "It depends on his vitality and how long the oxygen will help. Syncope will be the end, from loss of blood—that effort in bringing down the leader. But it ended the fight. A hero, *ma Mère*. Sacred savages," he ground out under his breath.

"Is Ben Zegri—the leader, I mean—dead?" The nun tried to keep all eagerness out of her voice.

"No. And he will probably recover. But he has that which will make him remember all his life the hand that shot him. He were better dead."

"Good," Mother Clémens *almost* said. The passionate, generous soul of Peter was in her. There were times, indeed, when it was hard for her

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to be the colorless, conventional 'holy woman.' She came back into the room and, opening her Office book, went to the light of a window.

Sabine laid her head on the pillow beside Antoninus. He had her warm hand, pulsing with life, close between his two numbing ones. Her other arm was under his shoulder as she knelt and held him with passionate, desperate tenderness.

If she could but give him of her strength, communicate to his ebbing life some of her own throbbing vitality. And if not, then to go out with him like this, together, hand in hand to meet the stars and what awaits beyond. With him she would have no fear, no incertitude. Wordless they held each other in a supreme embrace. Never had there been such communion of love between them, such ineffable flow of conscious understanding. She could feel the surging force of his love about her unimpeded now, when the whole world had dropped out and only they two mattered, in these last moments which ticked out their pitiful span, softly, from the great clock in the corner.

His mind was working rapidly with vigorous lucidity. And she was following him with the ~~sureness~~ *sureness* of love's prescience.

"~~These~~ lines, darling. Say them to me."

Her cheek was against him. She did not lift her head. She knew what he wanted. Softly she quoted:

"I have passed through the outermost portal
To the shrine where a sin is a prayer.
What care though the service be mortal,
O Our Lady of Torture! What care!"

His fingers tightened on hers.

"My sin was a prayer for you," he breathed.

It was that, then, which burdened his soul's peace. She nestled her cheek into his. "Ben Zegri is not dead. Nor will he die," she said. And raised her head at his quick, intaken breath.

"Ah! beloved. That is peace. More to me than you can know." Then he looked into her eyes, such anxious yearning in his own! "And you were not annoyed, you told me?"

"I never saw Ben Zegri," she again reassured him, her voice close to his ear. "At the *fegr* hour Zorah brought Timmy and he took me away. To the Consulate, then here."

For reply he pressed her hand. With infinite relief and thankfulness to him was the fact of Townsend's presence now. "Is Townsend there?"

Her ear was quick to note his growing weakness.



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She made a sign to Mother Clémens. And directly Morel and the nurse were with him and the oxygen had again done its quickening work.

"Sabine, *aziza*, my cherished one." His weak voice held the old love note that thrilled her. "I want you to love when I am gone. There must be love in your life. We can never have too much love. It is our part in divinity. . . . 'Exterior darkness.' That is self. To be cast out into the darkness and loneliness of self. Always I shall see you in a circling brightness of love."

His voice stopped. Morel looked up sharply. There was a swift movement in the room. Unsummoned they drew near. Before the serenity of that steadfast face there was not place for grief, for regret. Either were profanation in presence of the expectant, trusting eyes which bent their shining gaze upon the nearing threshold of the Father's house.

His look sought and found Townsend's.

"Take care of her," he said, and smiled.

Mother Clémens laid her hand upon his which covered Sabine's.

"Yes," he said as if pursuing an interrupted conversation between them. "Under the olive

trees; in the earth I love. The open sky above.
And——”

Courageously she bent close. “And—the Crescent?” she questioned.

His whole face upflamed with the splendor of his inherited faith. “No. The Cross—of my Fathers.”

The nun stooped and laid her crucifix to his lips.

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CHAPTER X

BACK 'WHERE THE DREAMS OF THE EAST COME TRUE'

TWILIGHT was settling down as, through foaming seas, the giant liner raced home. The crowded decks held their living freight of eager home-comers, of eager comers who had no homes, all alike straining for a first glimpse of the unsighted land ahead.

To the silent tan-cheeked man and woman standing apart, the great, glowing country they neared was the beloved cradle-land. Yet a strange divided sentiment seemed to keep them aloof, almost, in the general anticipation and to temper the thrill of their home-coming.

There is no stranger so alien in a land as he who, returning to his unchanged own, finds that he himself is forever changed. In the few short years of their absence a universe seemed to have unrolled itself between these two and the old life they were

coming to. The wisdom of a simpler age had given to them of its secrets. The voice of the desert had whispered to them and never again should they lose the lure of its call. Through ancient fields of asphodel their feet had led and they had gathered of the unfading flowers. They had hitched their wagon to the star of the East. And, hereafter, life's cares and commonplaces and futilities and sordidness could never quite engulf them.

"You will go back often?" It was their common thought he voiced.

"Part of every year. I shall always keep my home in Bemblah. It is part of me; as I am part of it. As you are part of it."

He nodded. They had not set foot upon their native shore, and already the Lilith of the sands, the deep, primordial Mother, beckoned them back.

A silence had fallen on the decks. Hope, dread, joy, anguish, were fused into the tenseness of a common suspense. The beat of the screw and swirl of waters at the ship's sides were the only sounds.

Then across the gray expanse out of the dusk came the deep distant stroke of bells; four sonorous, rhythmic, diatonic notes. Beautiful, weird, and uncanny out there, came the sound of the Metro-

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politan Tower’s bells, alone, of all the teeming sounds of the vast invisible city, to reach them. There was a holding of breath as every ear strained. And again the mellow strokes rang out their carillon. It was as if a presence walked toward them on the water with outstretched, welcoming hands. And suddenly the lights of Sandy Hook flashed into view.

“Home!”

There was a catch in Sabine’s cry. Was it home? Inexpressibly dear and set apart as it would ever be, could it ever again be wholly that to her now? The woman of her was not here. Instead of the high hope and gladness of her pictured return there was the sharp feeling within her of incompleteness and isolation. Something cried out unbearably for companionship.

She stole her hand into that of the man beside her.

“Timmy,” she ventured.

“Yes, Sabine.”



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